

# **Christian Ethical Implications of the Presence of the Kingdom as God's Performative Action in the Light of Speech Act Theory**

**By**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, Anna Cho, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and it has not been submitted previously in its entirety or in part at any university or college for a degree.

Signature: Anna Cho

Date: December 2017

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis engages some Christian ethical implications of the presence of the kingdom as God's performative action by reconsidering the role of the linguistic character of the biblical text from the perspective of the Speech Act Theory (SAT). In SAT, Christian ethics is not to be viewed simply as relating to the norms of human behaviour or moral principles that are extrapolated from the Biblical text. Rather, the performance of ethics in SAT must be considered from the perspective of God's performative action and intent (God's self-involving activity by illocutionary force). In particular, this points to God's speech act in daily Christian living. In other words, it is not only aimed at reconstructing the content, or meaning of the ethics of the kingdom in Scripture, but also aims at reconstructing the Christian life as the performance of the ethics of the kingdom by God's performative action. These ethical implications result from God's illocutionary action which creates the perlocutionary effect or action which is the perlocutionary ethical response (PER) in the believer. Namely, it constitutes what some would consider "the norms of Christian living" or "Christian ethics". The PER is a perlocutionary action in Christian life, which is based upon the intention of God's illocutionary force in the Bible, creates a specific responsibility for the contemporary Christian. She or he, is to live and act in accordance with the "Word of God". By this, it is not only meant the words of scripture, or the communicative content of the Bible, but also the illocutionary effect in the Words and their communicative intent.

The living Triune God is still communicating through Scripture. This communication is not only the relaying of past events or narratives. Rather it is communication in the present to fulfil God's will and God's kingdom among humanity and all creation. In SAT, the work of the Triune God, in terms of God's total speech act  $F(p)$  in the Bible, can be seen as the ethical identity of the moral agent *through* God's locutionary action. The ethical purpose of the rules of behaviour *in* Jesus's illocutionary action as well as the ethical responsibility *from* the effect of the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action in communication are also important and need to be considered in Biblical ethics. In other words, in Scripture, the self-involving character of the speech act involves God's deeper performative action. This produces additional meaning in the text for the contemporary reader/hearer in accordance with the illocutionary point that is constitutive

of the person of faith (e.g., specific moral conduct within a social community). Thus, God's self as a self-communicative act, continuously addresses God's people through Scripture, and God (the speaker) reveals God's self through Jesus (the Word) to those are illuminated by the Holy Spirit (reception). In this regard, the Holy Spirit participates in God's self-involving activity in the lives of believers. The Holy Spirit initiates a change in the attitudes and minds of believers to God's will, and empowers them to act in accordance with God's will in their private and public lives (i.e., individually and socially).

Accordingly, God's speech act  $F(p)$  in the Bible represents God's intention which is communicated through the biblical text for the Christian life as an intended perlocutionary action (ethical response). God's illocutionary action and its energy (power) are continuously being echoed for the Christian life with illocutionary force by what God is communicating to believers. This communicative activity and intent invites Christians to performative action in response to the Word of God operating in their daily lives – and this should be particularly important when we face moral or ethical issues. The intended perlocutionary effect faced by the Christian through the illocutionary force and power of God's communicative act requires us to respond properly (ethically) to the Word of God in the private and public domains (e.g., individual ethics and social ethics). Therefore, if we truly face the illocutionary point (intent) in God's communication, we should perform perlocutionary responses in our lives that respond appropriately to moral and ethical issues, in a manner that is in keeping with the content, intention, and ethics of God's kingdom.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis ondersoek van die etiese gevolge van die koninkryk van God se teenwoordigheid deur, vanuit die perspektief van Spraakhandelingsteorie, die Bybelse teks te heroorweeg as 'n handeling van God. Vanuit 'n spraakhandelings-perspektief kan Christelike etiek nie beperk word tot norme vir menslike optrede of morele beginsels wat vanuit die Bybelse teks ontgin word nie. God se performatiewe handelinge en bedoelinge word as meer bepalend beskou (met ander woorde, die self-betrokkenheid van God se aktiwiteite en die illokusionêre krag van God se uitsprake). Vanuit hierdie veronderstelling, ontstaan die vraag na die rol van God se spraakhandelings in die alledaagse Christelike lewe. Met ander woorde, 'n spraakhandelings-perspektief is nie net gerig op die inhoud of die betekenis van die etiek van die koninkryk van God soos dit in die Skrif daargestel word nie; dit poog eerder om die Christelike lewe opnuut te beskou as die konkrete uitvoering – deur God se performatiewe handeling – van 'n Koninkryksetiek.

Hierdie etiese gevolge vloei voort uit God se illokusionêre handelings wat 'n perlokusionêre effek, of eerder, *perlokusionêre etiese respons* (PER), in de gelowige tot stand bring. Dit is hierdie PER wat normaalweg bekend staan as die “norme van die etiese lewe” of “Christelike etiek”. Die PER in die Christen se lewe, wat tot stand gebring is deur die illokusionêre krag van God in die Bybel, skep 'n unieke verantwoordelikheid onder die kontemporêre Christen. Sy of hy moet volgens die “Woord van God” lewe en handel. Die “Woord van God” beteken egter nie net die woorde wat in die skrif staan, of die kommunikatiewe inhoud van die Bybel nie, maar ook die illokusionêre effek in die woorde en die kommunikatiewe bedoeling agter die woorde.

Die lewende drie-enige God kommunikeer steeds deur die Skrif. Hierdie kommunikasie is nie beperk tot die oordra van geskiedkundige gebeurtenisse of verhale nie. Dit is veel eerder kommunikasie in die hede om God se wil en God se koninkryk onder die ganse mensdom en in die hele skepping te volbring. In Spraakhandelingsteorie kan die handelings van die drie-enige God, in terme van God se gehele spraakhandeling  $F(p)$  in die Bybel, gesien word as die

etiese identiteit van die morele agent wat deur God se illokusionêre handeling geskape is. Ook die etiese bedoeling van die reëls in Jesus se illokusionêre handelinge, so wel as die etiese verantwoordelikheid wat voortvloei uit die Heilige Gees se perlokusionêre kommunikatiewe handelinge is belangrik en verdien dus aandag in Bybelse etiek. Die self-betrokke karakter van taalhandelings beteken dus dat die Skrif ook God se dieper performatiewe handelings insluit. Die gevolg hiervan is dat bykomende betekenis vir die kontemporêre lese/hoorder ontsluit word in verhouding tot die illokusionêre posisie wat bepalend is vir die gelowige persoon (bv. spesifieke morele handelings in 'n gemeenskap). Dus, God se self, wat verstaan kan word as 'n self-vertolkende handeling, hou aan om God se mense deur die Skrif aan te spreek; God (die spreker) openbaar God se self deur Jesus (die Woord) aan diegene wat verhelder word deur die Heilige Gees (resepsie). In hierdie verband, raak die Heilige Gees betrokke by God se self-betrokke aktiwiteit in die lewens van gelowiges. Die Heilige Gees bewerk 'n koersverandering in die houdings en gedagtes van gelowiges in die rigting van God se wil en bemagtig hulle om in lyn van daardie wil in hulle private (individuele) en publieke (sosiale) lewens te handel.

Die gevolg is dat God se spraakhandeling  $F(p)$  in die Bybel God se intensies verteenwoordig wat deur die Bybelse teks gekommunikeer word om in die Christelike lewe 'n bepaalde perlokusionêre handeling (of etiese respons) tot stand te bring. Die illokusionêre krag van God se woord weergalm deurlopend in die Christelike lewe soos wat God met gelowiges kommunikeer. Hierdie kommunikatiewe intensie en praktyk, waardeur die woord van God daaglik in Christene se lewens werkzaam is, nooi hulle uit tot performatiewe handelings van hulle eie. Dit is veral van belang waar 'n mens voor morele of etiese kwessies te staan kom. Die bedoelde perlokusionêre effek wat in die Christen tot stand kom deur die illokusionêre krag en mag van God se kommunikatiewe handeling vra na 'n gepaste etiese respons tot die Woord van God in beide private (individuele etiek) en publieke (sosiale etiek) terreine. As ons dus werklik die illokusionêre bedoeling van God se kommunikasie in die gesig staar, behoort ons perlokusionêre response op morele en etiese kwessies uit te oefen wat pas hou met die inhoud, intensie en etiek van God se koninkryk.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CSP:	Co-operative social participation.
MIF:	Messianic illocutionary force.
NE:	Narrative ethics.
PER:	Perlocutionary ethical response.
PME:	Propositional morality ethics.
RGIF:	Re-enactment of God's illocutionary force.
SAT:	Speech act theory.
ULNOE:	Unique linguistic nature oriented ethics.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and motivation for the study

Where does Christian ethics come from? In a broad sense, Christian ethics is based on the Bible<sup>1</sup>, the living Word of God<sup>2</sup> as the pattern for Christian action, or the norm for Christian living, in order to fulfil the will of God, and living according to the expectations of the kingdom of God<sup>3</sup> (Birch 2011:27-33). God continues to communicate with believers through the Holy

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<sup>1</sup> Grenz (1997:96) argues that a Christian ethic must engage with the Scriptures: “Like Snoopy, each of us has probably been guilty from time to time of misusing the Bible. We have all probably used Scripture simply to get ourselves ‘out the back door’ in the situations of life. But sensitive Christians want the Bible to be the instrument through which the Holy Spirit guides them into godly living. Indeed, a central goal of the Bible is to instrument the believing community about ethical living. Scripture, consequently, is foundational to Christian ethics.”

<sup>2</sup> In a general sense, Christians accord special significance to the Bible as containing, or presenting, the Word of God. However, this needs to be considered with a measure of nuance and even critique. There are clearly utterances in Scripture which describe violent and shocking events. For example, in Judges 19-21, we read horrible stories of rape, murder, war, and conspiracy (Lawrie 2015:37). In such cases, how can we consider the Bible as the Word of God? Are these really kingdom utterances? This is a crucial question that goes beyond the scope of this paper. It has been engaged by other scholars such as Lawrie and Birch (cited above). An aim of this paper is to show how an understanding of biblical language is adequate for informing the complexity of Christian moral life through SAT. Therefore, this article limits the scope of research in that it does not engage what may be considered problematic utterances or narratives in the Biblical text in illustrating the hermeneutic principle under consideration. This is an important topic and will need to be addressed fully in future research. However, it does find some accord in the work of others: “The word and work of the triune God in which Barth’s ethics is situated is not only particular; it is always also a living word and work... the living Word of God into abstract, general rules that supposedly govern Christian behaviour in all circumstances” (Migliore 2010:6-7).

<sup>3</sup> The scope of this project does not allow me to fully situate the evolution of the concept of the kingdom or kingship within the total history and contours of the discourse. This is not a study seeking to fully deal with the complexity of the kingdom of God in the Bible or in the Christian life. However, the aim of this study is to show how the notion of the kingdom is linked to God’s performative action in Christian ethical life in terms of God’s total speech act by using SAT, illustrating how it leads to moral implications in ordinary life. My interest is an ethical approach, not to study or establish a normative definition of the kingdom of God. Scholars disagree on what the phrase, the kingdom of God, meant in the Bible. Some scholars have interpreted the kingdom in terms of first-century Judaism while others have internalised or de-temporalized the concept of the kingdom of God and seen it variously from cosmological, spiritual, allegorical, mystical, psychological, philosophical, and sociological perspectives (Buchanan 1970:55). Some other scholars have understood the kingdom as both a future hope and a present reality (Taylor 1937:9; Cullmann 1951:81-83; Moltmann 1967:16-19; 1993:98; 1996:22-26; Pannenberg 1969:68; Hiers 1970:3; Fee 1991:11; Wright 2007:5). This “both-present-and-future” view has become a predictable feature in contemporary systematic theology (Pannenberg 1998:553). With Gustaf Dalman’s classic *Die Worte Jesu*, the attention of scholars was drawn to the fact that “*basileia*” in the similar phrases “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of Heaven” was a rendering of the Aramaic word “*malkuth* (מַלְכוּת).” This Aramaic word usually means “kingdom” in the sense of a territory ruled by a king. But as Dalman points out, it can also have an abstract force signifying “reign” or “kingship.” Dodd accepts Dalman’s perspective in his work, “*The Parables of the Kingdom*” (1935:34-44). While, Ladd (1974:91) argues that the kingdom is God’s sovereignty as redemptive rule and work, now present in the person, deeds, and words of Jesus; the kingdom and its blessings are present and vigorously active among persons. In addition, Hauerwas (1983:72-91) explains the concept of the kingdom of God from the perspective of Christian ethics, it shows Jesus as the presence of the peaceable kingdom; that is

Spirit which is closely linked to the presence of the kingdom of God as a reality in the world. God's kingdom does not operate in a vacuum but it takes place within the human response of living in the present so that human action is connected to the values and intentions of the kingdom of God (cf., Vanhoozer 1994:143-181; 1998:217; 2003:165).<sup>4</sup> It is not a place away from here, but where we live right now – the present.<sup>5</sup> In other words, it can be argued that Christian ethics is a thorough application of a Bible-centred and a God-centred ethics by all believers who live in the contemporary world. Barth (1961:4) notes that:

The task of theological ethics is to understand the Word of God as the command of God. Its fundamental, simplest and comprehensive answer to the ethical problem is that man's action is good in so far as it is sanctified by the Word of God which as such is also the command of God.

In addition, he claims that, “theological ethics is itself dogmatics, not an independent discipline alongside it” (Barth 1981:18). This means that Christian ethics can be considered theocentric. Similarly, Gustafson (1983:99) describes the importance of theocentric ethics thus:

Theocentric ethics could defend the view that the material considerations of moral life are almost totally related to *what is good for us, what is right* in person-to-person relations. One would be able to so restrict the considerations of ethics if the Deity were for man above all other things. But if the Deity is not bound to our judgments about what is in our interests, then theological ethics is radically altered. It may no longer be ethics at all in the traditional sense of Western culture and Christianity... Man the measurer, can no longer be the measure of the value of all things. What is right for man has to be in relation to man's place in the universe and, indeed, in relation to the will of God for all things that might dimly be perceived (*my emphasis*).

In general, Christians would agree that Christian ethics depends on the Bible and it is a

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Christian ethics. Hence, Christian ethics is the overriding significance of Jesus and involved Christology and eschatology. This is because Jesus comes into our communities as God becoming man in order to proclaim and prove the kingdom of God as a present and future reality. In my dissertation, in order to explain the relevance of the kingdom of God and Christian ethics, I have followed the opinions of the scholars mentioned above and many others (referenced in the text).

<sup>4</sup> Chilton and McDonald (1987:24, 31) point out that human action should be related to the notion of the kingdom of God: “Because the kingdom is of a God whose claims are absolute, it necessarily addresses itself to people as a cognitive and an ethical challenge at one and the same time.”

<sup>5</sup> According to Wright (1996:202; 2007:25), in the gospel of Matthew, the “kingdom of God” in Jesus’ sayings is phrased as the “kingdom of heaven” because of the social and theological character of the Matthean community. Since many people read Matthew first, they understand what Jesus meant when He talked about “entering the kingdom of heaven.” However, the word heaven in the New Testament means the establishment of God's sovereign rule on earth and in this world as it is in heaven. God's kingdom is not a place where we go after death, but a place where we live right now.

theocentric ethics. Although Christian ethics ought to be Bible-centred, it is difficult to shake off the idea that Christian ethics is a philosophy-centred or anthropocentric ethics.<sup>6</sup> Christian ethics has emerged from the general category of ethics and it was heavily influenced by different aspects of Greek philosophy (Van Til 2012:13-14).<sup>7</sup> Both Christian ethics and general ethics are part of the main branches of philosophical inquiry<sup>8</sup> which closely relate to the question of “what is the good life?”<sup>9</sup> or “what is justice?” These precede the answers to the questions of “how to live in the world”, “what is right” or “what is the purpose of life? In fact, for “most of church history Christian ethicists have articulated their conclusion concerning the nature of the life of discipleship cognizant that they live in a context shaped by and indebted to the philosophical tradition that dates to ancient Greece” (Grenz 1997:130).<sup>10</sup>

In this regard, Christian ethics cannot be completely ruled out as a human-centred ideology. Even though theological ethics has tried to outline certain biblical norms and biblical structures, in many ways, Christian moral dimensions have tended to concentrate primarily on human behaviour, human beings or moral disciplines rather than on God. In other words, theological ethics explores answers to the question of “who we are?”, “what we ought to do (how to live)?” and of “what we ought to be.”<sup>11</sup> These questions seem to search for answers to the fundamental

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<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that Christian ethics does not need philosophy, but that it should not neglect, or disregard, the Bible in doing so.

<sup>7</sup> Van Til (2012:13-14) shows that, to date, both Christian ethics and general ethics have developed by using three great traditions of Hellenistic philosophy which are virtue ethics, duty ethics, and consequence ethics. Whereas “virtue ethics focuses on the character of the actor; duty ethics focuses on the norms for behaviour; and consequence (or utilitarian) ethics focuses on the outcomes. Looking at ethics in this way uses a structure that thinkers in the western world have developed over a period of centuries. Constant reflection on ethics by both Christian and non-Christians has developed around these three themes.”

<sup>8</sup> I will offer more details on this issue in section 4.5.

<sup>9</sup> The question of what constitutes the good life is central to the concept of the moral life (Kretzschmar, Bentley & Van Niekerk 2009:14).

<sup>10</sup> Grenz (1997:130-164) has introduced three examples of classical Christian thinkers to explain the Christian ethical tradition namely 1. Augustine: Ethics as the love of God; 2. Thomas Aquinas: Ethics as the fulfilment of our purpose; 3. Luther and the reformers: Ethics as believing obedience. Grenz’s book contains more information on this issue.

<sup>11</sup> Moral sensibilities are about what is right and wrong or what we should do and about an overlapping awareness of what kinds of humans we are which is necessary to sustain the common life. Furthermore, these considerations can go beyond the mere identification of already existing patterns of behaviour and create new identity and norms as well as discover ways of improving the present human conditions. This leads us to the meaning of a righteous kingdom and the life of righteousness as Christians in the world and points to what is to be, what can be, and what ought to be.



questions of theological ethics.<sup>12</sup> The questions raise the question of “what is the *good* life?” which means, “what is *good* for humanity?” or the question of “what is of *virtue* (*value*) to human beings or human behaviour.” In some senses, good and virtue can be regarded as synonymous in relation to the notion of morality. Virtue is related to the character of a person (i.e., an internal locus of morality determined by values), rather than external laws. In other words, virtue has an internal coherence. According to the Greek philosophy, “good (virtue)” means “exemplifying the corresponding form” (Grenz 1997:66). For example, if we say that a certain egg is “good”, it should be that it exemplifies *eggness*. This means if you were an egg, the purpose of your life is to become the full intention of the egg, i.e., a chicken. If something is good, it reflects its form. Thus, since one is a human, one should manifest that *humanness* by becoming a good person. Aristotle (1980:14) explains that, “Human good turns out to be an activity of soul exhibiting excellence (virtue), and if there are more than one excellence, in accordance with the best and most complete.”<sup>13</sup>

In short, virtue aims at moral good but the issue of virtue is not so much concerned with what we ought to ‘do’, but with what we ought to ‘be’. In Greek philosophy, the word translated as virtue is *arete* (accordingly deontological and teleological ethics derive their names from the Greek words for “duty” and for “goal” in a certain community) (Lovin 2000:63). These forms of ethical reasoning lead to types of behaviour that help individuals and communities to make a ‘good’ or ‘right’ decisions in order to establish the right direction to life and society. In this sense, it could be argued that such a perspective is cantered primarily upon the human person (rather than God), and it emanates from Greek philosophy.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The question of what we believe or how to live in the present as Christians precedes what we ought to do before God and people, or how we ought to act based on our faith. In other words, spiritual need, that is, having strong faith in God, precedes life’s needs and it is also required for Christian morality. According to Hauerwas (1983:22), the question, “What ought I to be?” entails the question “What ought I to do?” This question of what I ought to do is actually about what I am or ought to be. For example, “Should I or should I not have an abortion?” is not just a question about an “act” but about what kind of person I am going to be, what kind of person I was or what kind of life I had (Hauerwas 1983:117).

<sup>13</sup> Aristotle viewed excellence as virtue. Other translations refer to the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. See Aristotle (1976:76).

<sup>14</sup> Traditionally, ethicists have tended to deal with the anthropocentric assumptions in Christian morality which sees the human being as the “measure of all things.” This idea suggests that God’s essential concern is with the well-being of humans in the present. Against this fact, Gustafson (1984:83-164) argues that the notion of anthropocentrism leads to a denial of God, as God will be God. It denies that God is our Lord who is master of

In contrast, some Christian ethicists argue that ethics is theology in action (Gustafson 1979:136-138). To put it in another way, theological ethics engages or encompasses totality of theology about God and thus it can be understood, or expressed, as the presence of the kingdom of God.<sup>15</sup> Lehmann (1963:45) points out that, “Christian ethics... is oriented toward revelation and not toward morality.” Thus, within this view, Christian ethics is about God rather than merely focussing on human behaviour or what is good for human beings.

How then do we develop a more authentic Christian ethical approach from the Bible (as God’s revelation to humanity) in relation to everyday moral and ethical challenges?

Over the last hundred years, a number of significant hermeneutic and ethical studies have attempted to find, investigate, and present various perspectives in theory and practice relating to Biblical ethics (as the revealed Word of God). These include the ethics of transcendence, of in-principled love, of discipleship, of liberation, of character and of narrative, and situation ethics (Grenz 1997:165-203). What is important, however, is to keep in mind that Christian ethics requires disciplined reflection on the issues raised by the Christian faith and a life based on the Scriptures (particularly for those Christians who hold to the notion that the Scriptures continue to reveal God’s character and will to humanity) (McDonald 1995:x). What my research has shown, is that contemporary Biblical ethical explorations are often theologically themed (e.g., justice in the Scriptures), or exegetical (e.g., what may one learn about social ethics from reading Mark 9:42-50), while not much attention is given to the role of the linguistic character of the biblical text. In other words, ethical theories have tended to focus primarily on moral principles, characters from the Bible, biblical theology, or biblical narratives, rather than on the communicative intent of biblical language. Hence, these contributions have not

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all things in the world, and all human activity should be ordered in relation God’s will and God’s intent. God is the power and ordering of life in nature and history who sustains and limits human activity, and who demands recognition of principles and boundaries of activities for the sake of humans and of the whole of life.

<sup>15</sup> In a general sense, theology is about God or God’s self and the phrase the “kingdom of God” implies God’s reign, as it points essentially and directly to God’s self (Jeremias 1971:9-14; Ladd 1974:64, 81; Kingsbury 1975:134; France 2007:271).

accounted for the dynamic and powerful nature of the communicative intent of biblical language for Christian life (Christian ethics). This is particularly pertinent if one belongs to a Christian tradition that believes that God continues to reveal God's self and will through the Scriptures. Moreover, it becomes difficult to explain the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life, in particular relation to the communicative intention of the biblical text, when relating such approaches to Christian ethics to the presence of God's kingdom.

It will be argued, that in Christian ethics the driving force behind human behaviour is the Holy Spirit and not the good heart or the motives of persons. According to Bruce (1982:251), the fruit of the Spirit is the Christian way of life, "the lifestyle of those who are indwelt and energized by the Spirit." The Holy Spirit works within the believers and believing communities committing and applying God's divine action in order to fulfil God's kingdom and God's purpose in the world and human lives in everyday life. The working of the Spirit makes redemption a present reality in our lives and the same Holy Spirit leads us to respond properly to God's communicative intent in the Bible as moral agents (O'Donovan 1986:102-106). To put it differently, Christians cannot adequately, or fully, follow the 'voice' (revelation or communication) of God without the Spirit. This means that a Christian ethics or Christian ethical behaviour cannot be separated from the Holy Spirit. Hence, the Spirit closely relates to human action in moral life in order to fulfil the kingdom of God not simply *as a helper* to do something *for the believers*, but *as an agent* who participates actively *in the lives of believers*. This perspective clearly evokes "God's self-involving activity"<sup>16</sup> in Christian ethics which makes moral dimensions a reality not merely as the individual's own effort but as God's performative action. However, previous studies in Biblical ethics tended to focus mostly on the notion of the life of the person, or some ethical theme in the biblical text, rather than on God's divine action which is expressed with communicative intent in biblical texts. Hence, Christian ethics does not only refer to a pattern of life based on the Bible as a one-way street but to God's active participation in human actions as a two-way street between God and humans in order to fulfil God's will and establish God's kingdom. Therefore, *God's performative action* can be

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<sup>16</sup> Evans uses the expression "self-involving activity". For a discussion of the term, see DD Evans, *The Logic of Self-involvement* (London: SCM Press, 1963:14).

seen as a form of theocentric ethics that is operative in Christian life.

In this sense, God's performative action in biblical ethics could be shown by reconsidering the performative dimension of the language in the biblical text. Texts have a specific momentum which focus on what the text is doing for (or to) a reader, and not simply what the text is saying, or what it means. Performative action, within the context of this study, refers to the active communicative intention of the biblical text as God's divine action, to spell out the norms and behaviours of the Christian life through the inherent linguistic force in the Scriptures. The possibility of a meaningful action in and by the text is said to be performative (Ricoeur 1971:529-566). This performative dimension of biblical language does not merely point to the informative fact of the text (i.e., what is right or wrong), but is a reality and testimony of what God is already doing for us, and in us, in contemporary life to realise the presence of God's kingdom. In other words, it will be argued that the inherent linguistic nature in the Bible shows that what we do with words should facilitate a tangible divine and human engagement in the present.

Thus, from this viewpoint, a social ethical approach to this performative dimension of biblical language would aim at reconstructing not only meanings of the kingdom (the triune God) in the form of propositional morality themes, but should also impact and empower Christian living, ethically and eschatologically in the public domain, that is, vis-à-vis the presence of God's kingdom and its citizens in daily life. To put it differently, the ethic of the kingdom infers not only the performance of meaningful actions in the Christian community but also in society at large, since this is where Christians live their lives. Hence, Christians do not merely assert certain facts about God's sovereignty in the world; they address God in the act of committing themselves to God's kingdom and applying their minds to its righteousness in their daily living and decision-making. In order to respond to these unique features of biblical language with its ethical foundation and intention, Christian ethical reflection on the kingdom of God should engage the text's central communicative theme, and facilitate the hermeneutic process of a re-narration of the story of the kingdom of God in relation to the text and its reader. This is because encountering God's kingdom in the present is a continual process of performing God's will

(ethical behaviour, or righteousness) by means of God's self-involving activity (Holy Spirit). Thus, a further question could be asked: How do we explain the presence of the Holy Spirit in Christian ethics as actualizing a performative aspect of biblical revelation in the biblical text in the tension between what should be (from the biblical text) and what is in the present? How does Christian ethics engage the tension between cognitive-propositional models of religious language and performative-ontology models of religious language in the biblical text through the inherent linguistic force of the presence of the kingdom of God?

Thus, the ethical implications of the performative dimension of 'kingdom' language in the Bible will be considered at the interface between biblical hermeneutics and Christian ethics in the light of God's kingdom.<sup>17</sup> In summary, since Christian ethics is based on Scripture, interpreting the Bible is crucial to a biblical ethical theory<sup>18</sup> which offers guidelines about how

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<sup>17</sup> There are various development theories and many different approaches to hermeneutic Christian ethics and the Bible. Seeing as this research is primarily about Christian ethics from the perspective of SAT, an in-depth analysis of hermeneutic Christian ethics and the Bible is not possible within the scope of this study. This research aims to illustrate the possibility for Christian ethics of a particular approach. As such this study is limited to considerations of Christian moral life in relation to SAT. More precisely, the concern of this study relates to biblical ethics, not to a direct approach to biblical hermeneutics as a whole. Since the research employs the term 'Word of God' in relation to God's self-revealing communication in the Bible as a hermeneutical tool to support the central argument of this thesis about Christian ethics by using SAT, it is possible that some may argue that the approach reflects a biblical literalist or fundamentalist understanding of the biblical text. However, the research would contest such a simplistic collapse. Indeed, the methodology of SAT does place a great deal of importance on the saying and communicative intent of the text since SAT is based mainly on the utterance of the speaker (or text). Yet, if one takes the theory seriously, as has been attempted in this study, it quickly becomes that a rigorous approach to SAT is predicated upon a careful and stringent identification, and engagement with social rules, customs and history including non-verbal conduct, that facilitate meaning in the text. Thus, the contention is that this is in fact a more stringent and careful engagement with the text and its social world than some other approaches to biblical ethics that only focus on the communicative content (propositions) contained in the Bible. That being said, my aim is not to suggest that my argument is a normative way or the only way to interpret God's intention for Christian life and not cover all other ethical approaches or even hermeneutic approaches, to the biblical text. Rather, this research shows a certain possibility for the approach to Christian ethics in relation to this particular approach. To be specific, as Birch & Rasmussen (1976:46) pointed out, the Bible is of primary importance to Christian ethics, but it is not an absolute, normative, literal authority on contemporary moral problems. This means that the Bible alone is not a sufficient guide for Christian moral life. It needs to be approached with hermeneutical sensitivity (which will be an expression of bias and so will limit the possible range of understandings). I am conscious of this in relation to my approach.

<sup>18</sup> In order to respond to this perspective, I will use a biblical text of the kingdom of God in Jesus' sayings and another from 1 John. These texts are selected as illustrative examples of the argument of this approach because they illustrate various aspects of the nature of communicative complexity and intent in biblical material. Performative biblical language expresses a particular divine purpose such as promise, warning, and exhortation all of which do something to the believer as the pattern of behaviour of Christian life in accordance with God's word in order to achieve God's kingdom in the present world.

to live, what to do and what ought to be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in faith communities (Birch & Rasmussen 1976:11-14; Vanhoozer, Bartholomew, Treier & Wright 2005:199-200). This approach has highlighted the fact that the performative aspect of language in the biblical text presupposes a divine – human exchange which has ethical implications for Christian life, and life in society at large (Vanhoozer 1994:144). Hence, the Bible is not only a primary source of doctrine, but also reveals God's ongoing activity in the world in the establishment of God's kingdom (Vanhoozer 1994:146).

The person of the Holy Spirit is central to this interplay. The Holy Spirit expresses God's performative action and its implications in everyday life thereby actualizing the presence of God in the life of the believer, and establishing the kingdom of God in society (cf., Vanhoozer 1994:143-181; 1998:217; 2003:165). The performative element in the language of the text should solicit a performative (ethical) response from the readers of biblical texts. In this sense, Christian ethics is an actualised expression (a testimony) in response to the text's inherent linguistic force and purpose. It can lead to the fulfilment of the kingdom of God in the present. Namely, those sovereign intentional actions in God's performative action in the text warn, promise, or exhort contemporary readers. If the Christian community performs something in accordance with the warning, promising and exhorting of the Scripture (as God's performative action), Christian ethics would truly Biblical. Naturally, not every person would agree with the view that the Bible is an expression of God's action. Moreover, it is recognised that such a perspective (i.e., the Bible as an expression of God's action) is necessary to engage the argument presented within the framework of this study. All theories are contingent upon the acceptance of certain notions. While this study will engage this contingency for the sake of the argument being made here, it is not the intention of this study to resolve, or further contribute towards, arguments relating to the Bible and notions of divine revelation. However, the argument presented here will show the possibilities that can emerge for Biblical ethics if the communicative intent of the biblical text is studied, rather than just the communicative content.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem and questions

This study emerges in response to an understanding of the presence of the kingdom as God's performative action and its relevance to Christian ethics by reconsidering the inherent linguistic features in the Bible from the perspective of Speech Act Theory (SAT).

Therefore, the research aims to address the following questions:

- (1) How does Christian ethics explain the tension between the meanings of the ethics of the kingdom in the propositional statement and the performance of the ethics of the kingdom in the performative dimension of language through the inherent linguistic force of the text?
- (2) What Christian moral implications emerge from a Speech Act Theory approach to the theology of the presence of the kingdom of God as divine discourse?

## 1.3 More insight into the problem

The living God is still speaking to us through the Christian Scriptures – not only in past stories but also in the present in order to fulfil God's will and God's kingdom. This means that the Bible has a certain momentum as God's performative action; it aims to do something to its readers according to the performative aspect of biblical language. The inherent linguistic characteristic in the biblical text presents what we should do as Christians or it causes a particular effect under the power of the Holy Spirit in the faith community.

The Holy Spirit has continually enabled the Christian community to understand and enact the intentions of Scripture in the Christian community (Kelsey 1975:29-30). This shows that the Spirit is closely linked to human behaviour as an agent who participates actively in the Christian community (Rom 8:3-4; Gal 5:25).<sup>19</sup> Therefore, Christian ethics cannot be separated

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<sup>19</sup> "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness



from the role of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works within believing communities, applying God's divine purpose in order to achieve God's kingdom in the present.<sup>20</sup> The aim of Christian ethics should help us to focus on what we ought to do, or what we ought to be, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, while depending upon the Bible and the Holy Spirit in order to participate with God in the work that God is doing in the world (Bosch 2011:67-70, 363-364). Therefore, this study will emphasize the importance of a holistic viewpoint of the ethics of God's kingdom which engages the role of the Bible, the Spirit and the Christians in terms of the performative action of the text itself in everyday life.

The possibility of what the text does, based on what it is saying, indicates that the text is performative in accordance with the performative dimensions of language. Speech act theory (SAT) concerns itself with these aspects of language use (see Austin 1975). It suggests that texts/speakers are not just uttering sounds, words or statements, but that they are able to perform actions according to their intention which means they do not just say something; they do something. In this regard, the task of linguistic epistemology in SAT is not to be viewed simply as re-telling of some biblical propositional statements for Christians. Rather, in relation to Biblical ethics the tension between alternative linguistic descriptions and the hermeneutic possibilities that arise from a SAT approach, point to the ethical possibilities of the performative action of the Bible in accordance with its inherent linguistic power. The rethinking of the different ethical dimensions of the kingdom of God as God's divine action and righteousness are highlighted in this regard. From the perspective of Biblical ethics, this proposal will strive to distinguish between general Christian ethical theories and their implications, and the communicative intent and action of God's speech acts in the Bible, whose meaning must be

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of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:3-4). "If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit" (Gal 5:25).

<sup>20</sup> Hauerwas and Wells (2011:18) say that "God does this through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings the remembered word of Scripture to life and transforms the anticipated hope of the kingdom into action." Furthermore, Harvie demonstrates that Moltmann is able to draw moral implications from a pneumatology which emphasizes the Spirit's efficacy for the ethical life of the kingdom. He (2009:97) states that "Holy Spirit allows construct a more detailed account of the relationship between the Christological work in the death and resurrection, the pneumatological efficacy of the future kingdom in the present, and the opportunity for creaturely participation in the ethical life of the kingdom. ... The divine Spirit to shape and mould its ethical life in a praxis which adheres to the lived characteristics of the kingdom."



considered so that they can be used to establish God's kingdom in contemporary life. Therefore, the performative aspect of language in the biblical text could open the way for new interpretive Biblical ethical understandings of the expectations and implications of God's kingdom for contemporary Christians.

#### **1.4 Aims of the research**

An aim of this research project is to investigate Christian ethics in relation the presence of the kingdom and its ethical implications using the inherent linguistic force in the Bible based on SAT in order to find possible new understandings and approaches to Christian ethics. Christian ethics is not merely limited to human behaviour or human beings; it also requires the performative action of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers which leads to the renewal and transformation of persons and society. Thus, this research aims to investigate novel and alternative connections between the linguistic characteristics of the concept of God's kingdom linked to God's self-involving activity and contemporary ethical dimensions of human life in the light of a SAT approach to biblical texts.

It will be argued that it is possible to account for the dynamic and powerful nature of biblical language as God's divine action in the Scriptures, in relation to Christian life in the present. This alternative linguistic epistemology based on SAT will consider the essence of the kingdom of God in the past as God's self itself (locution level), the present as Jesus' works (illocutionary level) and the future as effects of the Holy Spirit (perlocutionary level). These three levels are said to relate to three basic Christian ethical theories which are virtue ethics (areteological theories), duty ethics (deontological theories), and consequence ethics (teleological theories). The dynamic equivalence of the presence of the kingdom of God based on SAT within a Christian moral vision could inform and re-frame approaches to Biblical ethics. In this regard, an ethical theory about the kingdom of God according to SAT has implications not just for what we ought to do, but also for knowing who we are, or what we ought to be, which makes us do what we ought to do in the performative aspect of biblical language in relation to its inherent linguistic power.

Therefore, this research endeavours to investigate the notion of an ethics of the kingdom of God, and its implications, in two ways: Firstly, it will examine how the performative dimension of the language of the kingdom of God in SAT helps us to appreciate fully the original biblical author's intended message about a biblical Christian moral vision and Christian identity ([please refer to footnote 130 for a detailed discussion of this matter](#)). This is essentially an exercise in Biblical hermeneutics from the perspective of SAT. Secondly, the study will pay attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to a SAT approach to biblical ethics, and the way it can help us to understand God's speech acts within Christian community, which creates the form of Christian life that is an interpretive performance of Scripture by contemporary Christians in the public domain. In this way, the role of SAT in explaining the presence of the kingdom of God as divine discourse could offer new insights into the relationships that exist between God's self-involving activity in Christian lives, and the responsibility of God's people in a broken world. Therefore, the implication of SAT in relation to an ethics of the kingdom suggests the idea of an alternative Christian moral vision through which approaches to appropriate Christian behaviour could be understood and performed.

## 1.5 Hypothesis

According to Boeve notions of the kingdom of God have a recognizable pattern – the so-called 'Augustinian pattern' of creation, falling into sin, salvation and, ultimately, consummation (2004:307). In Christian theology, it is believed that the triune God engaged humanity and creation in the past, is living with us in the present, and leads us towards the consummation and realisation of the kingdom of God in the fullness of time according to the Word of God which is identified as God's self-revelation. This confession affirms that, "the God of the Christian Scriptures is a God who relates to human beings largely through verbal communication," which means that, "the word is God's-being-in-communicative-action" in the believing community (cf. Vanhoozer 1998:205; 2002:162). The triune God, as the presence of the kingdom in the past, present and future, communicates with God's people through spoken or written words in human languages as forms of God's ongoing revelation and engagement

with humanity (cf. Wahlberg 2004:1-19). In this revelation, “the Father is revealed, the Son reveals, and the Holy Spirit is the agent of revelation’s perfection” (Vanhoozer 1994:143-181; 1998:217; 2003:165). In this sense, SAT could shed new light on the sovereignty of God through which we encounter a renewed moral vision for Christianity, and it can help us to reconsider the ethical role of the Holy Spirit as an agent of God’s communicative intent (and force) when the Bible is engaged as a form of God’s ongoing performative action. This approach assumes that the Spirit works in and through biblical Christian ethics in contemporary life in accordance with the triune God’s divine revelation and engagement with the Christian community. SAT could thus be used to reconsider the notion of the sovereignty of God’s kingdom in terms of its religious meaning and inherent linguistic characteristics. The linguistic identification of the kingdom of God using SAT will be revisited from both social and ethical perspectives.

## 1.6 Methodology

In order to have a different perspective on the important role of God’s performative action in the ethics of the presence of the kingdom, the meaning of the kingdom, and its contemporary ethical praxis in various biblical texts (as one of the effective communication performance actions between God and confessing community), will be approached from a SAT perspective. There is great potential for such an approach to biblical ethics since it highlights how the texts can refer to the performing of acts through what it is saying in relation to the performative aspects of language force. It means that the texts do not merely say something; they do something in accordance with their purpose.<sup>21</sup> SAT concerns itself with this aspect of language

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<sup>21</sup> According to the above statement, the Word of God (the Bible) can be regarded as a doer or agent for the expression of God’s will. What is done in saying something can also be related to writing to do something. This conviction, in terms of God’s performative action in Scripture, arises in a certain sense from the locutionary act, the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act of language as God’s total speech act. It implies that the presence of the kingdom as part of God’s total speech act and as a divine force which includes the meaning of what God said (locutionary act), the force of what God said (illocutionary act), and the response of saying something (perlocutionary act). God reveals God’s self through Jesus Christ to those illuminated by the Holy Spirit which shows that God as Spirit works with divine force and power in the lives of believers. This is because God’s very being can be seen as a self-communicative act that both constitutes and enacts the covenant of relationship (communication) between God and believers. It indicates that language can be viewed as a covenantal medium of interpersonal communication; the speaker (God), the Word (Jesus), and the reception (Spirit) are all interrelated (Vanhoozer 1998:456). God’s total speech act can be seen as the communicative agent God (locutionary act), the communicative action by Jesus Christ (illocutionary act); and the communicative result by the Holy Spirit

use (see Austin 1975). It can be explained by certain ‘rules’ which govern human behaviour (Searle 1971:40). Searle suggests that, “speaking a language is engaging in a rule governed form of behaviour” (Searle 1969:22). To state it differently, to talk is to perform a series of language acts in accordance with certain rules in society. “Using language to communicate involves following certain socially agreed-upon rules. Accordingly, a theory of language must be part of a theory of action” (Vanhoozer 1998:209). Hence, for an utterance to be an act, it is necessary to have accepted a conventional procedure in relation to theories of communication. It indicates that, “there must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, the procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances” (Austin 1975:27).

In this sense, the propositional content of a speech act can be understood as having certain “constitutive rules,” which regulate activities, and often have the form, “*X counts as Y in context C*” (Searle 1969:35). For example, under the constitutive rules of soccer, when the soccer player kicks a soccer ball into the goal, it counts as one goal. There are conventions involved in these constitutive rules, which relate to all kinds of non-linguistic criteria. In this view (*X counts as Y in context C*), the first Beatitude (cf., Matthew 5:3) could be expressed as “*the poor in spirit counts as having the kingdom of heaven in the context of the promises of God’s blessing.*” To say “I bless you” or “I promise you” is to perform a speech-act of implied behaviour or commitment in relation to what was said by the speaker. Therefore, to perform illocutionary acts is to engage in “a rule-governed form of behaviour” (Searle 1979:17). In this case, Searle (1969:51) proposes the notion of “institutional facts,” which “are indeed facts; but their existence, unlike the existence of ‘brute facts,’ presupposes the existence of certain human institutions” (e.g. marriage for marital fidelity, or the rules of baseball for a baseball game). Furthermore, Searle (2001:58) differentiates between “brute facts” and “institutional facts” in the context of social reality. The particular sense of “institution” implied here is a “system of

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(perlocutionary act) in believers. Thus, in Scripture, the performative aspects of language force character of the speech act lies at God’s deeper performative action level which produces the meaning of the text according to the illocutionary force (intent) to the believer.

constitutive rules.” Thus, “the fact that a man performed a certain speech act, e.g., made a promise, is an institutional fact” (Searle 1969:52).

The ethical conception of the kingdom of God is itself “a rule-governed form of behaviour,” for it contains certain “constitutive rules” such as the value system of righteousness in Christianity’s social context. The cultural conventions involved in these constitutive rules are related to all kinds of “institutional facts.” The non-linguistic elements help us to recognize where illocutionary action operates, and to see that the illocutionary action creates “new realities” in the human community.

Similarly, Lindbeck (1984:18) explicitly argues for a “cultural-linguistic model of religion” as an alternative to cognitive-propositional models of religious language and experiential-expressive models, which he characterizes as typically conservative and liberal, respectively. One could say that whereas Lindbeck posits a third axis as a way of making sense of the other two (propositional content and force), SAT shows ways in which these first two are integrally linked. In fact, Lindbeck’s (1984:65) “cultural-linguistic model of religion” also stresses that the central function of language is the “performatory use of Language.” His linguistic view is based on Austin’s initial notion of SAT as a performative aspect of language which is seen as “the propositional truth of ontological correspondence only insofar as it is a performance, an act or deed, which helps create that correspondence” (Lindbeck 1984:65). Thus, there is continuity between the belief (righteousness) in religious language about the kingdom of God as God’s performative action and its ethical significance to political reality. In this hermeneutical interface between ethical theory and the theology of the presence of the kingdom of God in SAT, the reinterpretation of the religious and linguistic characteristics of the kingdom of God could reform and renew our view of social realities.

## **1.7 Provisional structure of the dissertation**

This dissertation will comprise of six chapters. The current chapter serves as a general introduction and provides the outline for the research. The chapter outlines the research

questions and hypotheses, as well as the methodological approach to engaging the identified theological problem. With respect to methodology, the study will examine Christian ethical implications to the presence of the kingdom within a particular interpretive framework, (namely SAT), by revisiting the linguistic force in biblical texts. The chapter also includes an overview of the basic concepts on the relationship between the kingdom of God and Christian ethics.

Chapter 2 will be a brief survey of studies of the kingdom of God in the context of cognitive-propositional, as well as performative-ontological, religious language and their ethical content. It will help to distinguish the inherent linguistic force in the biblical passage which may provide insight into how one appreciates the biblical text as one of the effective communication performance actions between God and God's people, as a dynamic reality across time and place in the present world. Furthermore, the second chapter will engage the theological disregard for the relationship between biblical language and its religious belief according to the ethical appropriation of the concept of God's kingdom. In this regard, the chapter will analyse and interpret notions of the kingdom of God and Matthew 7:1-6 in the Greek text by relating it to SAT.<sup>22</sup> This serves to illustrate how approaching a biblical passage in this manner can help to elucidate the inherent linguistic nature of the text itself as well as literary features such as an oral/aural phenomenon which is able to explore the dynamics of linguistic activity and its effects. The chapter will also examine various form of biblical narratives about the ethics of the kingdom in the tension between propositional language and performative language in order to make a difference between applied meaning and inherent linguistic force in the performative character of this approach to aspects of biblical language in certain biblical texts. Therefore, the research will emphasise the need for an alternative linguistic epistemology to describe the concept of the kingdom of God and its ethical appropriation in the contemporary performance the ethics of the kingdom.

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<sup>22</sup> The scope of this project does not allow me to deal with a whole Bible to analyse biblical language. However, my aim is to show how the possibility of a SAT approach to the text (in relation to biblical ethics) helps to bridge the gap between the meaning of the ethics of the kingdom and its performance in Christian ethics. However, for situated clarity I shall curtail my engagement to the above biblical passages as illustrative examples of the argument.

Chapter 3 will attempt to formulate a Christian ethical theory of the presence of the kingdom from the perspective of SAT. In addition, it will suggest an alternative linguistic epistemology in the light of SAT as a complementary strategy for moral performance in the context of the kingdom of God. The aim of this chapter is to survey the methods and terminologies employed by SAT, particularly in the works of Austin and his students, Searle, Evans, Pratt and Grice, in order to provide an alternative framework for evaluating Christian ethics in a broken world. The interface between SAT and Christian ethical approaches to the ethics of the kingdom, relating to the performative dimensions of biblical language in Biblical ethics, and some suggestions for human behaviour in social reality, will be considered. In this case, the chapter will map out new directions for determining Christian identity and the form of Christian life that would inform the performance Christian morals in contemporary life.

Chapter 4 will explore the interface between hermeneutics and ethics from the perspective of SAT. It will examine the role of the threefold character of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in terms of the essence of the totality of the kingdom of God as God's performative action in the past (locution level), the present (illocutionary level) and the future (perlocutionary level). The three levels will be related to three basic Christian ethical theories namely virtue ethics (areteological theories), duty ethics (deontological theories), and consequential ethics (teleological theories). Furthermore, the theological and ethical implications of the theories for the performance of morality as a form of faithful witness to the kingdom of God in the present life will be investigated. This hybrid approach to the presence of the kingdom of God based on SAT within a basic Christian moral vision will serve to reenact Christian ethical performance and its identity in the contemporary world.

Chapter 5 will present an example of the application of such an alternative Christian ethical performance theory from the biblical text in relation to a contemporary political reality (namely the concern for human rights). From a hermeneutic perspective, this example will be considered from the perspective of SAT. This ethical performative force is represented through the performative aspect of biblical language whereby the Holy Spirit, as a moral agent of God's

communicative revelation, is able act with divine force in the believing community in order to produce moral action in society. Furthermore, the chapter will explore the role of the Holy Spirit in biblical ethics in connection with the God-world relation, as divine discourse in relation to human rights (including some exemplary ethical complexities related to this topic), in the community. This role of SAT in ethics will offer new ways of thinking about the presence of the kingdom of God as God's dynamic and powerful performative action for God's world. It could be an alternative criterion by which a Christian engages the biblical text under the power of the Holy Spirit for the establishment of an aspect of the kingdom of God in contemporary society.

Chapter 6 will present the summary and conclusion of the study.



## CHAPTER 2

# A SURVEY OF THE RELIGIOUS LINGUISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COGNITIVE-PREPOSITIONAL AND PERFORMATIVE-ONTOLOGICAL LANGUAGE AND ITS MORAL DIMENSIONS

### 2.1 Chapter Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to carry out a comparison of the contrasting concepts of cognitive-propositional and performative-ontological religious language of the kingdom of God in relation to certain biblical texts. The comparison will help to determine textual moral content by reconsidering various perspectives and meanings in relation to “propositional morality ethics” (PME), “narrative ethics” (NE), and “unique linguistic nature oriented ethics” (ULNOE).<sup>23</sup> The discussion begins with a text about the kingdom of God in the proclamations of Jesus foregrounding the superficial features of the sentence, the locus of an action, and the way it enables an interactive process of communication between author/speaker and reader/hearer to do something. The action creates the meaning of the text, which is produced by what the language provokes in the reader in accordance with the inherent linguistic force in the text itself. This is because “meaning is conceived as the outcome of a creative interchange between the author of a text and its readers” (Tovey 1997:22).

Thus, the chapter explores how this approach to performative biblical language in the Scriptures produces meaning and how to discover some possible additional meaning that the author may have intended to communicate, and how this could transpose across time and place from the intended readers to the current readers of the texts. It also applies such meaning to real life situations, not just as a container of past stories but also as the working of the living

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<sup>23</sup> I have created these terms in relation to Duck-Hyun Kim’s idea of how biblical language works in the perspective of SAT to support my argument. See Duck-Hyun Kim’s PhD Thesis, “*The Homiletical Appropriation of Biblical Passages in the Light of Speech Act Theory: Preaching as a Performance of the Biblical Text*” (Stellenbosch University Ph. D Thesis, 2014:23).

‘Words of God’ in the present.<sup>24</sup> Hence, the chapter examines how assumptions about inherent language features, and the kind of literature that focuses on the history of the interpretation of the Bible, could inform exegesis based on understandings of ethical truth or doctrinal principles that engage texts dealing with the kingdom of God, and its ethical value for contemporary Christian life.

Thus, the survey could offer new hermeneutical insight into the message of the kingdom of God as one of the communication performance actions between God and believers in order to achieve God’s will and God’s kingdom in the present world. It also helps to draw ethical meanings from the biblical passage, that is, between the propositional elements of the text and its performance. In particular, this chapter outlines the performative aspects of biblical

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<sup>24</sup> Briggs (2001b:230) says in his article, “The Use of Speech-Act Theory in Biblical Interpretation” that, “Speech act theory has obvious potential for assisting in the interpretation of texts (biblical and otherwise)...Despite a slow trickle of articles over the past 25 years, there have been only a handful or more extensive works making exegetical use of speech act insights.” Due to Christian biblical ethics [being](#) based on the Bible, interpreting the biblical text is crucial when drawing Christian ethical implications. Nevertheless, current theological researchers using the aspect of SAT has [not](#) fully tapped into Christian ethics. However, some theologians such as Thiselton (New Testament theology), Vanhoozer (Systematic theology) and Wolterstorff (Philosophical theology) have consistently suggested the usefulness of SAT for theological hermeneutics in the different theological areas respectively, but by using same method and approach of regarding Scripture as God’s speech act (Thiselton 1992:286, 2006a:76-81; Vanhoozer 1998:291, 2002:162; Wolterstorff 1995:13, 2001:83). They also believe that “A word or text only has meaning (noun) if some person means (verb) something by it” (Vanhoozer 1998:202). To support my argument, I have used the three theologians mentioned above and developed, my logic and argument starting with them. Thiselton has frequently proposed in his works [that](#) biblical language can be understood as speech acts because many biblical utterances are “performative”, which refers to the language of the biblical text as performative action through illocutionary force. In his primary work [on](#) the blessings and curses in the Old Testament, “The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings (1974),” he argues that accepted constitutive rules given a certain social context could help biblical interpretation to recognize the role and effect of the illocutionary action as referring to the text’s intent (meaning). Meaning is obtained not just through words and the utterance of sounds (content), but rather by doing something as an “act” (communication, illocutionary action) in a community with “a rule-governed form of behaviour” (Searle 1969:12). It indicates that meaning is governed by institutional facts or constitutive rules in a particular community, in other words, what people appreciate as collective intentionality in accordance with their social rules. Furthermore, Vanhoozer regards the Bible as “God’s communicative act,” and biblical texts as suitable for the concept of textual meaning as the intended authorial meaningful action, which also entails the modern reader’s response according to the Word of God. In this sense, Vanhoozer’s notion of the meaning of a text is closely linked to the public space. Vanhoozer (2002:161) claims that, “The conclusion highlights what follows for biblical interpreters from this analysis [speech act theory]. It is not insignificant that the leading categories for describing interpreters-witness, disciple-are drawn from the language of theology. For nothing less will do in describing our properly theological responsibility to hear, and to understand, what God and neighbor are saying/doing when they address us.” Finally, Wolterstorff suggests the notion of “double-agency discourse” for answering the question of how God speaks to humans in the Bible which is written by humans. It entails the idea that God is a participant in human discourse and offers an understanding of God’s performative action as divine discourse and of the human response to the Word of God as Christian moral conduct in trust and obedience (Wolterstorff 1995:35).

language and considers this as a hermeneutical tool for biblical interpretation of different notions of the kingdom of God from the perspective of Christian ethics. It investigates illustrative biblical narrative forms relating to kingdom ethics in the tension between propositional religious language and performative religious language in order to make a distinction between an applied meaning (based on the shared Christian life in relation to the Scriptures) and the unique linguistic power in the performative character of biblical language. The study thus argues that there is a need to expand the tasks of exegesis to deal with the ethical performance of texts, so that it could promote the Christian life from the viewpoint of a biblical ethics of the kingdom.

## **2.2 A propositional approach to the biblical text from the perspective of the Kingdom of God and Christian Ethics**

Christian ethics frequently engages the Bible as a primary source (Birch 2011:27). This is since the Bible refers to God and the redemptive work of God in God's people as it relates to the presence of the kingdom of God in human history (Jeremias 1971:9-14; Ladd 1974:64, 81; Kingsbury 1975:134; France 2007:271). Thus, Christian ethics could be called an ethics of the kingdom, or a form of human norms that operate under God's sovereign rule (cf. Ladd 1964:274-300; Moltmann 2012:3). It can be argued that Christian moral content lies in the confession of the believing community which starts from the profession, "God (Jesus) is my Lord" (1 Cor 12:3). A Christian who sees herself or himself as Christ's servant is wholly at the disposal of her or his "Lord". This means that members of a confessing community can also look to that Lord as the one to whom they are solely responsible, not only in obedience, but also in trust, in order to achieve God's intent and God's kingdom in everyday life. Therefore, Christian ethics relates to Christian profession regarding ~~the ethics of the kingdom~~ ethics; it is important to query the role of the confession of Christian faith in the ethics of the kingdom of God.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> I strongly argue that Christian ethics is an ethics of the kingdom. Therefore, I will use this terminology of Christian ethics as synonymous with ~~an~~the ethics of the kingdom in this study. The point will be developed, substantiated in the literature, and considered at various stages throughout the study.

For several centuries, a number of significant ethical studies have attempted to interpret the Bible using a cognitive-propositional approach to discover and investigate a moral vision that is based on the Christian faith. This is because the propositional approach to biblical ethics presents the objective norms of life<sup>26</sup> as a rational task. The ethical implication of the biblical text in propositional morality ethics (PME) lies in an understanding of the inherent features of aspects of biblical language.<sup>27</sup> It refers to the truth, or communal confession, in the proposition and its implication to create meaning and an ethical morality theme. Specifically, relating the Christian faith to the ethics of the kingdom entails the proclamation of PME in the biblical text, and Christian ethics is understood as relating biblical language to biblical moral knowledge and information. To put it differently, moral theory seeks to develop the Christian life in which all believers could participate and to which all believers through human reasoning (a propositional approach) could have access to a rational justification of morality based on God's revelation (i.e., what we have been referring to as the Word of God, or God's Word). It means that Christian ethics requires a certain pattern of behaviour that relies on a rational objective law or rule in order to maintain and preserve the faith community and its profession.

Thus, the recognition of Christian biblical ethics is needed to conduct a cognitive, rational and objective study of the Scripture. It can be achieved through a propositional approach to biblical interpretation because it shows informative facts of the surface of the statement about what is right or wrong and contains information to be communicated about how to live or what one ought to be as Christians in accordance with God's revelation. The context of a cognitive-propositional approach to the biblical text, regarding the ethics of the kingdom, and based on Christian confession, entails the rational interpretation of Scripture as a unique linguistic feature.

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<sup>26</sup> Norms are standards which govern all human behaviours in a universal manner. For the more information on this issue, see Wozniak and Granz (1986:69-85).

<sup>27</sup> Naturally the Bible does not contain a uniform, or single 'form' of language. There are varieties of forms of texts, genres, and even languages and language conventions evident throughout the corpus of the books of the Bible. However, what is suggested here, is that there is at least some shared sense of 'form' or communicative intent in the Scriptures, since they are believed to function as different means of revelation through which God reveals God's self and God's will to humanity.

### 2.2.1 Challenges with the Propositional Morality Ethics (PME) approach to Christian Ethics in the biblical text

The propositional rational aspects of ethics, as a hermeneutical tool for biblical ethics, could be traced to Augustine (354-430 CE) (Battenhouse 1979:15-56; Grenz 1997:130-141).<sup>28</sup> While reading one of the works of Cicero, Augustine discovered that happiness is not only the possession of truth but also the quest for truth (Hackstaff 1964: xi-xii). This point was at the heart of Augustine's theological ethical thought which argues that correct moral knowledge leads to correct action, or virtuous conduct, which is only realised in the context of love for God because the ethical life is based on the will directed towards God (Grenz 1997:131-139). Augustine's core conviction of the hermeneutical task focused on ultimate knowledge as a mystical intuition of the divine in order to search for divine truth. This in turn was devoted to revealing the transcendental signified proposition inherent in God's love. Augustine (1953:88) argued that the cognition of a proposition in the meaning of the text is more important than the words themselves: "I agree that the knowledge conveyed by the sign is more important than the sign itself...The knowledge is superior to the sign simply because it is the end towards which the latter is the means." He sees the interpretation of Christian ethics as propositional morality ethics (PME) in the biblical text (i.e., a propositional approach to the Bible). This is because the place of PME in an ethical theory of the Bible, as an objectively reasonable task, demonstrates and refers to what the text is saying or what it meant (i.e., the objective of the theme in the text). These are viewed as informative facts or objective accounts about biblical ethical concepts (i.e., the theme) and principles. In other words, propositional knowledge (in relation to a propositional approach) indicates something which presents itself at the level of

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<sup>28</sup> Christian ethics has emerged from the general category of ethics that was influenced by Greek philosophy, and Augustine was also heavily influenced by Greek philosophy especially Neoplatonism. Bigham and Mollegen (1979:371) note that "The Augustinian theological ethic is a deep and real synthesis of Neoplatonism and the New Testament." According to Grenz (1997:137), "Neoplatonic foundation Augustine built his understanding of Christian ethics... From Socrates onward the Greek outlook elevated knowledge as the pathway to wisdom (reason) and hence to the ethical life. The great philosophers believed that at least to some extent the human moral problem was due to ignorance; evil is an error in judgment. Consequently, the antidote to evil is knowledge... Namely, that if people obtain knowledge of the right they can and will do the right. Augustine was too heavily influenced by the Bible to adhere slavishly to this principle. He came to see that the human moral problem is not merely ignorance. We do not only lack knowledge of what is right, we also lack the ability to do what the law commands".

the sentence or text, and which also describes what has been written. Indeed, the PME (cognitive-propositional knowledge) in the text could have an impact on the reader (as a form of moral agency, or an ethical force). How then is it possible to perform normatively in the reader, in the tension between knowledge and action, even when there remains a gap between them?

One approach is to argue that this propositional knowledge, as an objective statement, only relates to the content of what is said rather than what the passage wants to do in the reader (i.e., the *text's momentum*).<sup>29</sup> The interest of the propositional approach to the text lies in the thought-content which no longer has any influence on the inward life of the reader because it simply refers to propositional meanings as informative facts. It also has no power to do something to the reader or cause a particular effect, as it does not touch the core of the reader (cf. Searle 1969:31).<sup>30</sup> A helpful example is Jesus' response to the teacher of the law who inquired of Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" and "Who is my neighbour?" (Lk 10:25-37). First, the teacher of the law asked Jesus "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied: "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" In other words, these questions can be presented as "What principles or knowledge do you find in the text through the PME?" This question has to do with an objective propositional understanding. The teacher of the law answered, saying, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." He answered correctly according to the teaching of the law, but Jesus' answer did not have the desired effect on him. He merely understood the propositional meanings (PME), that is, he had a simple

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<sup>29</sup> Traditionally, philosophers focused on the propositional elements such as truth or falsehood, but Austin points out that many sentences that appear to be statements do not really work as statements at all (Austin 1975:1-5). Syntax, as a propositional approach to the text or the study of the grammatical form of sentences, uncovers certain statements or facts. However, in the hermeneutics or communication situations, this propositional approach is often problematic due to its structure. For example, "The cat is on the mat but I don't believe it" may be a syntactically correct sentence, yet it is nonsensical since it is semantically incorrect (Vanhoozer 1998:208-209). Therefore, in order to interpret a sentence accurately, it is important to consider the propositional approach to the text and consider what is happening behind the propositional dimensions to understand what the text is saying when relating the inherent linguistic force. This includes a careful consideration of the circumstances and specific situation of the communication event or action.

<sup>30</sup> It can be assumed that if someone does something due to what it was said, the state of mind of the reader would have influenced what was said in order to prompt the action.

understanding of the utterance but this did not prompt any reaction of the reader not to do something. It means that the reader does not know how to apply this knowledge or understanding to real life situations as performative conduct of the nature of the language in the tension between understanding and action. If the teacher of the law had an accurate understanding of the law in accordance with the unique linguistic force in the text, he would not have asked Jesus the second question.<sup>31</sup>

The teacher of the law's second question is "Who is my neighbour?" The reason for the question was to determine the limits of the circle of those he must love, which means that a certain principle in the community shows a specific standard of human reasoning that enables one to act properly, or appropriately. The pattern of behaviour is only valid within the context of human reasoning as it determines the limits of anything that we as Christians ought to do before God and people. It also shows that the action which is controlled by propositional knowledge is not a dynamic but a static resource. In keeping with this, Jesus' point was not to ask, "Who is my neighbour?" but "To whom can I be a neighbour?" (Marxsen 1993:95-97). There is a huge gap between the two when it comes to conduct. To translate the question, "Who is my neighbour?" into concrete action, one must determine the boundary line as specific data in order to actualize the law in the present life, that is, one has to love or do something for one's neighbour. In other words, propositional knowledge in a reasonable sense leads to a restriction on behaviour depending on the limit that has already been set which means that one is only available for a certain action within the list of what constitutes my neighbour. This shows that the aim of the question "Who is my neighbour?" is to refer to the limits of the circle, or the principle of knowledge about what has to be done, rather than what could be done for them.

On the other hand, the question "To whom can I be a neighbour?" presents what the message wants to do in the performative aspect of the text in accordance with the text's momentum (inherent language force) rather than what is said in the PME. This question does not need to

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<sup>31</sup> The teacher of the law asked Jesus the question "Who is my neighbour?" in order to justify himself. This implies that he is knowledgeable on this issue (propositional knowledge). However, he did not know the true meaning that Jesus intended (intent). For more information on this issue, see Marxsen (1993:95-126).



determine the limits of the circle of those whom we must love – which implies that it is also not necessary to draw limits for the action of another person. Stated differently, one could simply approach a stranger (neighbour) and do something for him or her. This means one can become a neighbour to everyone since there is no limitation to the scope of who a neighbour is irrespective of his or her behaviour. This also means that if one can do anything for one's neighbour, one opens up the possibility of becoming a neighbour to all. It evokes something from the text beyond the propositional knowledge which results in the simple question, "What can I do for you?" It focuses on the doer who does the action according to the performative dimension of the language rather than on what ought to be done with a specific subject, for example to love, or what should be done in the propositional meanings.

The teachings of Jesus went beyond the text of any discussion of the rightness and wrongness of acts within the PME. Rather, Jesus desired to speak about the doer<sup>32</sup> who is doing something (Marxsen 1993:125-126) because this paradigm leads to a concrete action in others by not relying on the propositional approach as a means of enforcing the limitations of another person's action. This illustration with the teacher of the law's questions shows that Jesus' ethical intention was not to focus on the PME based on a specific standard of human reasoning by defining the boundary for the subject and the action in the question, "Who is my neighbour?" Rather, he focused on the doer who is doing something based on the performative action in accordance with the text's momentum which asks, "To whom can I be a neighbour?" Hence, to produce particular ethical conduct in the PME, the meaning of what is being said about the text as PME should be regarded as the meaning of what the inherent linguistic force is doing through that PME. Therefore, the determinants of human behaviour in a specific way relate to the performative aspects of a thing not only to the PME (propositional understanding).

### **2.3 A Biblical narrative approach to the Ethics of the Kingdom**

As mentioned earlier, to facilitate the intention of the text in the readers (what the passage

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<sup>32</sup> The issue of the doer mostly focuses on the performative aspects rather than on the propositional matters since the propositional understanding refers to a certain principle or theme while the performative dimension points to what is being done by the hearer who is the doer within this schema.



wants to do in the reader), it is necessary to consider the inherent linguistic nature as a performative action according to the intention and momentum which are based on propositional knowledge. A simple statement, or an informative fact, no longer influences the core of the reader (cf. Searle 1969:31). The text's momentum in the performative dimension of language takes place within a certain community as practical meanings from the text because the language reflects on human beings as well as the nature, identity, and faith of the community.<sup>33</sup>

In this sense, the performative aspect of languages in the Bible create a common confession in the believing community which requires an interpretative task. In order to respond to this, it is important that biblical interpretation establishes a link between dynamic hermeneutics and ethical studies.<sup>34</sup> The aim of interpreting the Bible is to enable the performance of Scripture by the people of God in order to fulfil God's will and participate in the establishment of God's kingdom in the contemporary world as we seek to link the words of Scripture and our responses to them. Therefore, the interpretive performance of Scripture in Christian ethical theories could be seen as the performance of patterns of action in the Christian community in relation to the presence of the kingdom according to the performative dimension of biblical language as the living Word of God (cf. Fowl & Jones 1991:19-80).

It is assumed that the role of faith communities, as communities of interpretation, is to interpret the Bible and produce theological content for contemporary society.<sup>35</sup> Thus, narrative ethics has emerged as an option that helps to uncover the text's momentum (ethical meaning), and it becomes an interpretive performance of the Scripture. This implies that the moral movement in the biblical narrative approach does not aim primarily to convey the PME, but rather to create

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<sup>33</sup> According to Frei (1974:135, 160), "The historian of the Biblical text is interested in that to which the text refers or the conditions that substitute for such a reference. In short, he is interested not in the text as such but in some reconstructive context to which the text 'really' refers and renders it intelligible...and where the clue to meaning then is no longer the text itself but its reconstruction from its context, intentional or cultural, or else its aid in reconstructing that context, which in circular fashion then serves to explain the text itself."

<sup>34</sup> Since hermeneutics began with the question of how we come to understand the Bible, it takes the place of classical epistemological theory which means that it cannot be separated from the field of philosophy (cf. Ebeling 1963:317).

<sup>35</sup> The Bible is a dynamic literary communication situation through which the reader's understanding is formed by the narrative choice and the strategies of the author (cf. Tovey 1997:19).

a biblical understanding of a participative experience in today's context. It is an answer to the question of how the biblical world applies to the modern world as a living experience in the faith community.

An important ethical notion in narrative ethics is highlighted by Stanley Hauerwas in "*The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*". It identifies the relationship between biblical story and Christian ethics in relation to the believing community and the kingdom of God. Hauerwas is described as "the most significant and influential exponent of narrative among contemporary Christian ethicists" (Nelson 1987:109). For Hauerwas (1981:1), the church, (as an interpretive community) is supposed "to be a community capable of hearing the story of God we find in the Scripture and living in a manner that is faithful to that story", as it bears witness to God's kingdom and as we as Christians discover our responsibilities and duties in God's story (1983:102, 44). The inference is that the biblical narrative can offer a specific hermeneutical insight into the relationship between the ethical implications of performative biblical language and Christian life or Christian ethics. In other words, a biblical narrative approach to Christian ethics does not merely refer to *what the Bible meant*, but also to *what the biblical text is doing* to the reader as a performance action that is based on the inherent linguistic power in biblical story and the shared narrative markers in the community.

The study of the linguistic nature of the effect of the text on the reader began with Fuchs (1903-1983) and Ebeling (1912-2001). Fuchs (1964:196-198) was concerned about how the message of the Bible could be applied by contemporary believers in their present situations ways that would effectively "strike home" (*treffen*). This suggests that a paradigm shift for hermeneutics took place from the focus on "*What it meant*" in the biblical text to a focus on "*What it means*" from for present-day readers of the Scriptures through "a translation of language" in which the message engages with the different horizons of the hearers. This has been described as the "New Hermeneutic"<sup>36</sup> which is about the understanding of the words (communicative

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<sup>36</sup> Fuchs and Ebeling are regarded as the pioneers of the so-called "New Hermeneutic" which builds on Bultmann's "hermeneutic" interest, but they go on to suggest a new perspective. Fuchs faults Bultmann for going too far in his reductive view of history, and offers a fresh view of the text which he calls a "New Hermeneutic" of the historical Jesus (Fuchs 1964:212). He argues that Jesus' preaching and parables have to do with such language

concepts), not just a matter of understanding individual words. Fuchs and Ebeling were heavily influenced by Heidegger's statement that "language is the house of being" because existence is expressed in most cases through language. Fuchs (1964:193, 209-222) argues that language itself has the power to bring into being something that was not there before the words were spoken and it also indicates that the text itself is meant to live. This inherent linguistic force as a dynamic and powerful activity confronts the reader as a "language-event" (*Sprachereignis*) rather than a "speaking-event" (*Sprecherereignis*) (Ebeling 1963:325-330; Fuchs 1964:210-212).<sup>37</sup> It creates mutual understanding as the effective communication performance action achieves its purpose between author/speaker (God) and reader/hearer (God's people). In other words, it does not convey a certain fact or notion about what language is, but it is about the use of language or about what language does.

Furthermore, Fuchs (1964:30, 212) states that the Word of God is capable of creating faith and it has been noted clearly that a language event presupposes some kind of continuity between God's words and God's conduct, especially in the teaching and parables of Jesus in the New Testament. The Word of God enacts "an event in which God himself is communicated... God's Word and deed are one: his speaking is the way of his acting" (Ebeling 1961:87-90). Indeed, for Heidegger (1961:145), "the essence of language is found in the act of gathering". In Fuchs' (1964:208-209) words, "The proclamation gathers (i.e. into a community) ... and this community has its being, its 'togetherness', in the possibility of its being able to speak the kind of language in which the event of its community is fulfilled...*The language of faith brings into language the gathering of faith*" (*his italics*).

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events and as such they can help to interpret the present. Furthermore, "In the proclamation of the resurrection the historical Jesus himself *has* come to us (Fuchs 1964:30-31). The so-called Christ of faith is none other than the historical Jesus...God himself, *wants to be encountered* by us in the historical Jesus" (*his italics*). Fuchs' writings include *Christ und der Geist bei Paulus* (1932), *Hermeneutik* (1954), and *Marburger Hermeneutik* (1968). Ebeling also published *The Nature of Faith* (1961), *Word and Faith* (1963), *Theology and Proclamation* (1966), *The Word of God and Tradition* (1968), *An Introduction to a Theological Theology of Language* (1973), *Study of Theology* (1979) and *Luther* (1980). For more information on the New Hermeneutic, see "*The New Hermeneutic: New Frontiers in Theology*," Vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

<sup>37</sup> Fuchs uses the term *Sprachereignis* (language event) in much the same way as Ebeling's *Wortgeschehen* (word event or speech event). Thus, I will use the term language event in order to acknowledge the unity in the text.

When the word is proclaimed, “community is formed” (Fuchs 1964:202-203) which means that the performance of the unique linguistic characteristics as “gathering” can bind together our common understanding of a specific intended action in the community. In short, new hermeneutics investigates *the Word of God as a language event* in the biblical text which results in the *confession of a believing community* from common understandings (intention) according to the nature of language as “gathering”. It also means that the words of Jesus in the Bible can be re-enacted through *speech-acts* (with events or the world) across time and space. It may have an effect on the people of God in accordance with the performative language as *a new possibility* of opening up the world of the text.

In fact, texts have a specific momentum. This refers to what the language in the text wishes to do with what it says. It relates to the use of language in the text in terms of the performance of an action in the social community and according to its inherent linguistic nature (cf. Austin 1975). McClendon (1986:45, 328) argues that Christian ethics, as ethics for disciples in the faith community, should be a narrative ethics which finds a common life in the body of Christ.<sup>38</sup> Hauerwas’ (1983:24-25) remark in this regard is also noteworthy:

The nature of Christian ethics is determined by the fact that Christian convictions take the form of a story, or perhaps better, a set of stories that constitutes a tradition, which in turn creates and forms a community. Christian ethics does not begin by emphasizing rules or principles, but calling our attention to a narrative that tells of God’s dealing with creation.

Thus, *narrative ethics is story-based*<sup>39</sup> *ethics which investigates, analyses and criticises a way of life and morality in a certain community* (McClendon 1986:332). It sees the believing community as an agent in Christian ethics.

Similarly, Hauerwas draws his ethical theory from narrative, tradition and virtue. A summary

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<sup>38</sup> “We begin by finding the shape of the common life in the body of Christ...That is ethics. We continue with the investigation of the common and public teaching that sanctions and supports that common life” (McClendon 1986:45).

<sup>39</sup> Cupitt (1991:77) points out the importance of story, saying, “Stories are and remain theological in a fourfold sense. Every story just by being a story constitutes a promise that life can be meaningful. That is the job of stories; they make life make sense. Secondly, every story has, is and conveys a moral in the sense of a piece of practical wisdom about life...Thirdly, every story inoculates values: it is strongly action-guiding or regulative. Finally, stories in the telling define the identities of their own leading characters.”

of his argument would be that *the Christian community embodies the narrative of God* at work in human history, that is, for the sake of the kingdom of God in the world. According to Hauerwas (1983:1), all ethical reflections take place relative to a particular time and place which implies that the structure of ethics is determined by the particularities of a community's history and convictions. Hauerwas (1983:19-34) affirms that most ethical theories focus mainly on moral principles and not stories. Although biblical moralities largely depend on the story of people's journey with their God through salvation, resurrection and grace.<sup>40</sup> Through the narratives we discover that the only way to know God, the world and self, is through history. Therefore, knowledge of self is tied to the knowledge of God, that is, we know who we are or what we ought to do only when we can place ourselves and locate our stories within God's story (or Jesus' story). Biblical ethics is based on biblical stories in their context and are determined by Christian convictions; the primary emphasis of Christian ethics is not on rules or principles, but rather on stories as the performative aspect of biblical language (the performance of an action in the Bible).

As a language event, biblical narrative ethics based on the Word of God has inherent linguistic power to bring to expression the reality to which it points and it can help to shape one's attitude according to the linguistic force (i.e., its purpose and its momentum). It also considers the nature of language as a performative action which is able to accomplish its meanings in the biblical text and to re-enact an event for the faith community in order to achieve God's kingdom in the present world. According to Stroup (1984:91), "Christian narrative, therefore, assumes a literary form akin to that of confession or religious autobiography." Fackre (1983:343) also affirms that narrative becomes the decisive image for understanding and interpreting faith. Narrative ethics in Christianity is based on Jesus' story which provides us with new ground, a new outlook, and a new dynamism leading to the transformation of our lives (McClendon 1986:273) because Jesus' story is the pattern of Christ's intended action as it is narrated in the

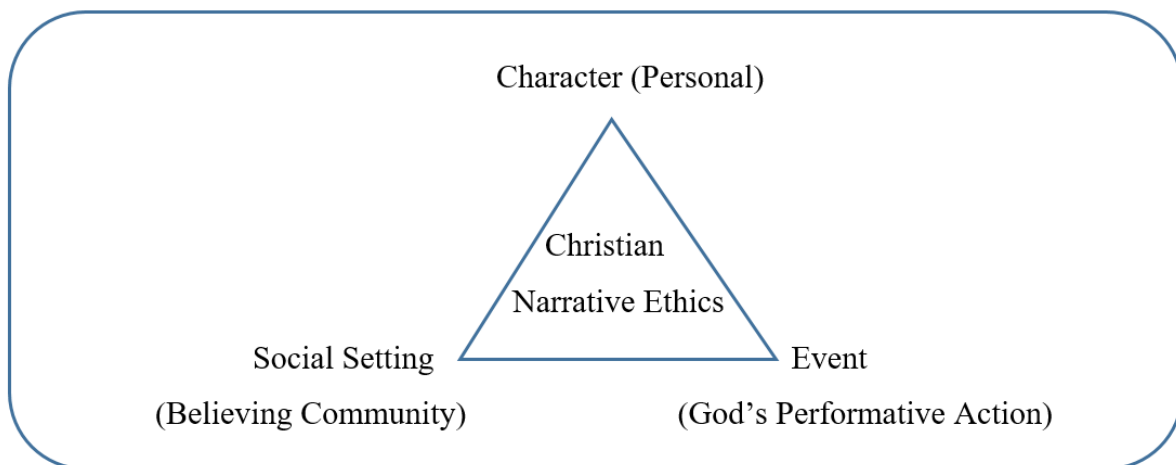
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<sup>40</sup> Note Deuteronomy 6:21-25 which says, "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes, and he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land which he swore to give our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as at this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us" (in Hauerwas 1983:23-24).

Bible (Frei 1975:160). God has revealed God's self in narratives in the history of Israel and in the life of Jesus. The Scriptures as a whole tell the story of the covenant with Israel, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the on-going history of the church in which we discover our true identity by locating the self in God's life, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the community (Hauerwas 1983:28-29). That is to say, the centrality of the life of Jesus in shaping the Christian life and Jesus' life, death, and resurrection offers us insight into what constitutes Christian ethics. McClendon (1986:332) argues that:

*Because its task is the discovery, understanding, and creative transformation of a shared and lived story, one whose focus is Jesus of Nazareth and the kingdom he proclaims - a story that on its moral side requires such discovery, such understanding, such transformation to be true to itself. To be sure, Christian theological ethics must know this story, must understand this story; when it does so, it thereby constitutes itself a 'narrative' ethics (his emphasis).*

Drawing from McClendon's (1986:330-331) own suggestion, it is assumed that biblical ethics reveals elements of a narrative: character (the strand of embodied selfhood), social setting (the communal or the believing community) and the circumstance of the incident (God's action upon us), as is shown below in this diagram that captures McClendon's view:



Diagram\_1: Christian narrative ethics

Christian ethics therefore might be characterised as biblical narrative ethics for the kingdom of God through God's Word (story) and deed in Jesus Christ in the confessing community.

In this regard, it is realised through the discovery of the inherent language force and intent in the performative aspect of the biblical text. The identity of the faith community from the Jesus' story suggests that a certain action in Jesus' story, should achieve something in the community in accordance with a specific purpose that the inherent linguistic force performs in the context of the kingdom among contemporary members of the community. This intentional narrative ethics is not just PME, but Jesus' story itself which performs a particular action in line with the Word of God in the performative aspect of the language as a living language event for contemporary readers. It creates the identity of a community as a pattern of behaviour that reflects on the ethical event as true and necessary in everyday life.

### **2.3.1 Problematic aspects of a Narrative Ethics (NE) approach to Christian Ethics in the biblical text**

To a certain extent, narrative ethics (NE) pays attention to the role of the performative aspect of biblical language, especially the text's momentum and its performative effect on the believing community in order to build up the people of God to live in the present according to the narrative aspects of the Word of God. Nonetheless, it does not fully explain the dynamic and powerful role of the performative element of biblical language in the performance of Scripture by the people of God in such a way that it accounts for the nature of biblical language in narrative texts. According to Hauerwas (1983:66,162), the notion of the narrative is of central importance to Christian ethics; it is the medium through which God chose to reveal God's self, that is, to make a self-disclosure (revelation). In this sense, one could contend that NE is God's revelation. Hauerwas explains that:

*Revelation is not a qualifier of the epistemic status of kind of knowledge, but rather points to the content of certain kind of knowledge. We call knowledge about God "revelation"... To say knowledge is "revealed" marks it as being about God... Narrative character of the canon, together with its designation as Word of God, suggests that the canon might plausibly be construed as a story which has God as its 'author'... a story that finally involves and relates all persons and events, and which, as it is told and heard in the power of God's Spirit, becomes the vehicle of God's own definitive self-disclosure... God is... the author; the story's disclosure is God's self-disclosure (my emphasis).*

However, from the viewpoint of the performative aspect of language in the biblical text,



“revelation” presents God’s divine action as divine discourse (God’s speech act),<sup>41</sup> and not knowledge about God (Wolterstorff 1995:19).<sup>42</sup> In the text, certain knowledge is regarded as an informative fact or a logical argument which simply indicates the propositional element or the meaning, containing the information to be communicated between the text and the reader. This specific knowledge in the text, conveys to the reader formal information such as truth or falsehood; it has no power to do something to the reader or cause a particular effect (cf. Searle 1969:31). *God does not only reveal God’s self in knowledge about God (e.g. God is one) in the Bible, but also as an act (such as an act of blessing, promising, warning, exhorting, and so forth), to the people of God that would enable them to follow God’s will for God’s kingdom.*<sup>43</sup>

For example, in 1 John 1:5, it is written that “This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.” The passage does not simply indicate the propositional content, “God is light”, but it also exhorts the believer or warns false believers who neither follow God’s way in the Christian community nor have a correct understanding of the Word of God. Specifically, *it entails a particular divine purpose which enables the hearer to do something according to the inherent linguistic force as a warning or an exhortation.* Hence, this command reveals something about God, but it is not a mere revelation of knowledge content: “God is light”. The point is that the believer should obey the divine discourse. In other words, Scripture does not merely refer to the knowledge of God, but rather to performative acts such as obedience or disobedience, that is, God’s divine

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<sup>41</sup> Thiemann (1985:144-150) regards the Bible’s narrative description of God as the narrated promise of God which invites the reader to enter the world of the text by responding in faith and discipleship. He claims that, “The sense of the biblical narrative, i.e., its patterns of identification and predication, provides the structure for the narrative’s referential claims, i.e., its way of tying language to the world. The narrative’s propositional content suggests its primary illocutionary force, which in turn invites the response which will complete the ‘interlocutionary act’ between speaker and hearer. By ‘interlocutionary act’ I mean a successful act of communication which elicits an appropriate response from the addressee... The promise is a promise solely by virtue of the promiser’s locutionary and illocutionary acts... The biblical narrative functions as God’s promise only in relation to a believing community... that narrative as God’s promise.”

<sup>42</sup> According to Vanhoozer (2002:163), Wolterstorff’s concept of divine discourse is philosophically necessary in biblical interpretation and also necessary as a theological concept. In his book, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflection on the Claim that God Speaks* (New York: Cambridge University, 1995), Wolterstorff’s method is based on the speech act theory in the work of JL Austin. It shows how the performative aspect of biblical language could strengthen an understanding of God’s performative action and the performance of the ethics of the kingdom with which to engage with the divine discourse in biblical passages, which can be understood not as God’s revelation but rather as a divine speech act.

<sup>43</sup> God speaks to God’s people as a language of action and not as a language of revelation.



discourse as God's speech act rather than mere revelation of propositions or knowledge. Therefore, *knowledge of God alone cannot cause believers to carry out the performance of Scripture according to the narratives in, and of, the Bible.*

This viewpoint began with the question of how to go about reading a text to find out what God might have said or be saying with that text (Wolterstorff 1995:38). It entails the idea that God is a participant in human discourse. Vanhoozer (1998:205) notes that, "The God of the Christian Scriptures is a God who relates to human beings largely through verbal communication," which shows "the word is God's-being-in-communicative-action" (Vanhoozer 2002:162). God's divine communications on the ethical dimensions of the presence of the kingdom can be understood as intending action in the human community according to these linguistic characteristics.<sup>44</sup> According to Baker (1995:3), "Oral communication is an event as important to a person's ethical behaviour as deeds... and in some ways more important... since it is in speech that a person most directly conveys his interior thought, motivation and desires." Similarly, Vanhoozer (1998:205-207) asserts that the "design plan" for language is to enable communication and understanding, which like the mind, another divine endowment, was designed by God to be used in certain ways. It encourages us to think of communication in terms of intentional action as an approach to Christian ethics. Therefore, *"the design plan of language is to serve as the medium of covenantal relations with God, with others, with words"* (Vanhoozer 1998:206, *his italics*).

These considerations underline what the performative aspect of biblical language intends to say and do among and within believers. It informs what Christian ethics aims to achieve in ordinary life. In the context of the performative force of words, the use of language is to achieve a performative action rather than to utter certain information such as a propositional meaning.

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<sup>44</sup> Vanhoozer (1998:205) notes that humans have the capacity to communicate and to understand God's words as beings created in God's image. He writes that, "The Old Testament shows how the fate of individuals and nations depends on the way in which persons respond to God's message that comes through the Law and the Prophets. The underlying presupposition of the story of Israel, and the story of humanity as a whole, is that humans are able to understand the word of God and words in general. The New Testament goes further: it pictures language (e.g., parables, preaching) as having the power to transform people's lives."

In addition, it is important to consider what intentions and effects are fulfilled by what is said in divine communication since the biblical text stands between God (the speaker or revealer of God's self and God's will) and God's people (readers of texts) as an embodied intention in the text that leads to a desired action. This embodied intention can be seen as God's divine action, not only as propositional revelation; it aims to warn, promise or exhort the confessing community according to the inherent linguistic power of the text, for the sake of the kingdom. Thus, Christian ethics, understood in this way, has a form of moral agency, it does not just refer to some information such as "God is light" or "God is one". Rather, such ethical narratives have inherent linguistic force and a purpose to fulfil the kingdom of God in the present. That is to say, if the Christian community does something in accordance with the warning, promise and exhortation of the Scriptures (understood as God's performative action), Christian ethics would be about more than just propositional revelation, or knowledge, they would have ethical intent. This holds a renewed promise for Biblical ethics.

## **2.4 Reconsidering the Ethics of the Kingdom through Unique Linguistic Nature Oriented Ethics (ULNOE) from the perspective of the performative dimension of biblical language**

Language creates new realities. It can bring a world of reality into being that is related to what has been written or spoken as a language event. A language event is conceived from the hearer's perspective, and a performative utterance is a statement by a person which is existentially grounded (Thiselton 1980:336-337). The concept is similar to the idea of "performative utterances,"<sup>45</sup> which concentrate on the inherent linguistic nature of communication, according to the force of language, in order to achieve its meaning and to enact an event in the present world by relating the world of the text to the contemporary world. These performative aspects of biblical language should be anchored in the history of the Bible as a language-dynamic which offers hermeneutical insight and shapes the interpretive possibilities of the text or narrative. It can also lead the reader (or believing community) into a performance act of the text to bridge the gap between the biblical text and the praxis of the kingdom of God in

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<sup>45</sup> See J L Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

contemporary Christian life. The performative dimension of biblical language has a certain intentionality that is captured in a unique linguistic nature oriented ethics (ULNOE) in the biblical text according to a particular divine intention that achieves something based on the performative biblical text as an act of communication between God and the people of God in order to build the kingdom.

Thus, Christian ethics should consider the essential questions in biblical interpretation that relate to the ethics of the kingdom, that is, the ULNOE in relation to the biblical text such as: What does the ULNOE in the Bible aim to achieve? How does the ULNOE function to build up the people of God in, and for, the world? These questions can be applied to debates about what constitutes the relationship between the intention of biblical language and performative faith (biblical ethics). The process could distinguish between *the meaning of what is said about the text, that is, the meaning of the ethics of the kingdom* and *the meaning of what the unique linguistic power does through the text, that is, the performance of the ethics of the kingdom*. In the interpretation of the task of Christian ethics, the meaning of the ethics of the kingdom does not simply refer to a biblical morality theme. Rather, it focuses on the inherent linguistic nature in the text and how it produces performative meaning and activity, between the meaning of biblical ethics and a performance of the ethics of the kingdom. This means that the biblical text, specifically those sections about the kingdom of God, create a new reality. This reality can affect the lives of believers who may experience a transformation through the performative power of words.

The performative use of biblical language expresses aspects of God's divine action such as promise, warning, and exhortation, all of which do something to the believer in line with the communicative intent of biblical texts.

In this regard, the performative dimension of biblical language helps to remind us of the praxis of the ethics of the kingdom. The Bible is not supposed to be interpreted only in an academic context. It is also to be engaged and understood for the sake of the kingdom of God by the

people of God who take part in the establishment of the kingdom in the present as they seek to link the word of God and their responses to it in the contemporary life. Therefore, Christians should learn to live faithfully by embodying Scripture. Fowl and Jones (1991:29-80) emphasise the importance of the interpretation of Bible and of embodying the Bible as follows (framed in relation to ULNOE in the biblical text):

The interpretation of Scripture is... a lifelong process of learning to become a wise reader of Scripture capable of embodying that reading in life. Learning to embody Scripture in our lives, both corporately and personally, requires that we develop specific patterns of acting, feeling, and thinking well. This is an exercise in practical reasoning and depends on being able to judge a certain situation as being similar in some respect to another situation, moral maxim, or canonical text... We still need to address how Scripture is related both to the various contexts in which we live and to other possible sources for ethical guidance... because the world remains a part of God's good creation... We are enabled to live in a way that faithfully witnesses to God's kingdom.

The view above suggests that the Christian community should try to find the text's momentum (as a performative aspect of its communicative intention) in order to build up the people of God to live in the world, and to participate in the activities of the kingdom of God not as spectators but as active participants in the present. It not only refers to what we ought to do but what we are in relation to God. The performative power of words is of great importance to biblical ethics since it opens up a rich tapestry of interpretive possibilities for appropriating the text and its communicative moral intent. Therefore, the interpretive performance of the Scriptures in Christian ethics could be seen as the performance of patterns of action in the Christian community for the furtherance, or establishment, of the kingdom and accordance to the performative dimension of biblical language as God's ongoing communicative revelation.

#### **2.4.1 Religious linguistic characteristics of the Kingdom of God as language of promise in the Beatitudes**

The Bible repeatedly calls the reader to respond to warnings, commands, invitations, judgements, promises, or pledges of love (Thiselton 2006a:86). The Word of God (i.e., God's communicative revelation of God's will and person), has a particular divine purpose according to the inherent language force. It is seen as a divine promise between God and the believing community (the people of God) that would help them to fulfil the kingdom of God and God's

purposes in contemporary life. Accordingly, the sayings of Jesus have to do with the same language event. This event is able to do something to help the believer to make a decision or perform an action (i.e., communicative intention expressed in communication that solicits a response from the reader). The Beatitudes<sup>46</sup> are a good example of such sayings.

The language of promise, as a performative aspect of biblical language, provides useful examples of the variability between explicit and implicit speech-acts – between instances when vocabulary may seem to signal an illocution and when an illocutionary act of promise occurs without the use of the expected vocabulary. For example, the statement, “I promise to come” refers to an explicit communication event between two people. Whereas, “I intend to come” is an implicit statement. An implicit speech-act has a propositional meaning of “promise” in the same context of the utterance of an illocutionary act with the same propositional content but one is able to identify the operation of different forces of speech, and it cannot be expressed as a word of promise.

Most promissory acts in the biblical text do not use the word “promise” directly; in many cases, they are replaced by declarative language. These include, for example, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3); “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20); or “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). In fact, not only are the Beatitudes described as promises of eschatological blessings and expectations of the future consummation, but they also contain information about what to do in the present in order to attain those future blessings. The performative aspect of the language of promise represents not only future things which are not yet fulfilled in terms of the yet unseen goal, but it also offers guidelines about how to live and what one ought to do in everyday

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<sup>46</sup> Some scholars regard the Beatitudes as ethical demands that people observe to ensure their admittance into God’s eschatological kingdom (Windisch 1951:26-31; Strecker 1988:33; Hannan 2006:47). Others regard the Beatitudes as promises of eschatological blessings for those who have responded to God’s saving call in Jesus Christ which gives assurance of participation in the future consummation (Guelich 1976:415-434; Allison 1999: 42-44). Talbert (2006:47) argues that the Matthean Jesus had already called and attracted disciples and was now addressing the sermon to His disciples. However, in the view of this author, given that in Matthew’s Gospel grace underlies human achievement, the Beatitudes cannot be regarded as entrance requirements but are rather to be seen as promises of eschatological blessings.

life to attain them. Thus, the Beatitudes relate to both moral instruction and promises of eschatological blessings for God's people.<sup>47</sup>

The inherent feature of promise in the biblical text entails institutional facts or conventions which underlie such illocutions as promise or commitment and rest on the covenant relationship in accordance with God's divine purpose in the performative power of words as expressed in the Beatitudes. The blessed life that Jesus proclaimed in the Beatitudes is not a private life, but rather a communal form of life that has social and political implications (Hauerwas 2011:262). Thus, the act of promise brings to light most clearly the commitments and responsibilities of the agents of promise within an inter-subjective public, extra-linguistic world of ethical undertaking and address (Thiselton 2006b:126). According to Davis (1994:215), "the criterion of individuation of illocutionary acts like promising... is not individualistic." In addition, "[a]n act of promising depends on the linguistic practice of a speaker's linguistic community... an utterance of '*I promise to do A*' will place him under an obligation to do A'" (Davis 1994:216). It can be seen as:

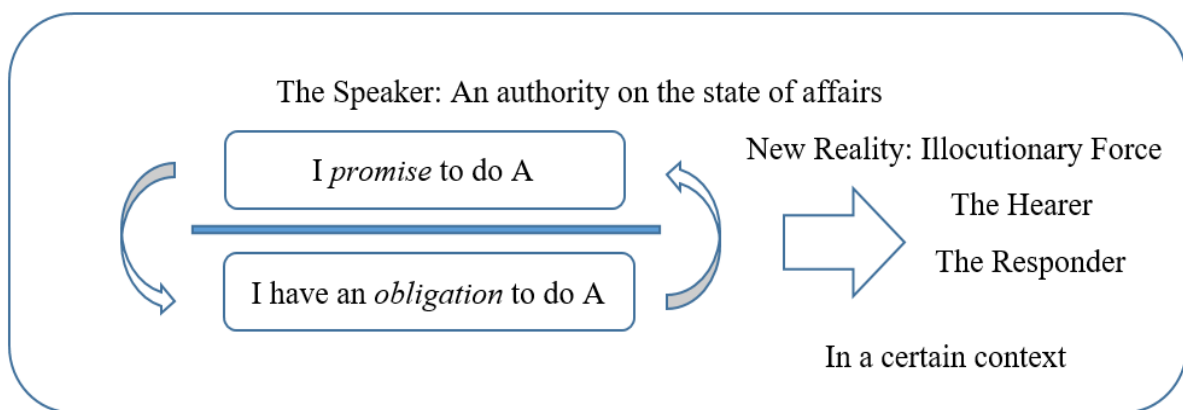


Diagram 2: Promissory acts

In the context of the performative power of words of promise in the Bible, this can be viewed

<sup>47</sup> The content of the Beatitudes is twofold. One is the promise of eschatological blessings while the other is a portrait of the recipients of these blessings. In other words, the first four blessings deal with the disciples' vertical relationship, and the last five have to do with horizontal relationships. The Beatitudes contain a portrait of and promises to the disciples. For more information on this issue, see Talbert (2006).

as “God’s self-involving activity”.<sup>48</sup> This means that when God speaks a promise to God’s people, the promise does not just refer to the utterance or the propositional content of the utterance, rather, it also does something to the believer. The performance of such action by God is a continual process of performing God’s righteousness to adhere to the Word of God in the confessing community through God’s self-involving activity and the obligation solicited by God’s involvement. Searle (1969:58, 60) maintains that the statements “‘I promise’ and ‘I hereby promise’ are among the strongest illocutionary force indicating devices for *commitment* in the English language... The essential feature of a promise is that it is the undertaking of an obligation to perform a certain act” (*his italics*).

In the performative dimension of language, the utterance and its propositional meaning under certain conditions constitute the making of a promise. It can be seen as “X made a promise”, and includes such notions as the intentions and manner of behaviour of the speaker/text. This is accomplished when a speaker expresses the proposition that is promised in the speaking of the text according to the performative language force. In other words, the propositional content can be understood as having certain “constitutive rules,” which regulate activities and often have the form, “*X counts as Y in context C*” (Searle 1969:35).<sup>49</sup> For example, the first Beatitude can be expressed as “*the poor in spirit count as having kingdom of heaven in the context of the promises of God’s blessing.*” To say, “I bless you” or “I promise you”, is to perform a speech-act that contains the pattern of behaviour that would be determined by what is said. This performative aspect of the language of promise is not merely saying something, but is also an action according to a particular intent. The notion of promise offers a paradigm of the broader role of institutional facts that provide foundations for valid illocutionary acts. Such promises claim special status as a performance act in the context of covenant (Thiselton 2006c:146), and contain specific conditions through which a speaker takes on certain responsibilities (Searle

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<sup>48</sup> Evans uses the expression “self-involving activity” in DD Evans, *The Logic of Self-involvement* (London: SCM Press, 1963:14).

<sup>49</sup> Unlike the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes as the promissory speech act of biblical covenants do not follow regulative rules but constitutive rules. According to Searle (1969:33), regulative rules regulate independently existing forms of behaviour which characteristically have the form or can be comfortably paraphrased in the form “Do X” or “If Y do X.” On the other hand, constitutive rules do not merely regulate, they create or define new forms of behaviour which often have the form “X counts as Y”, or “X counts as Y in context C” (Searle 1969:33-35).

1969:62). The performative force depends on a situation in which one's linguistic act "counts as" what sets the illocution in force (Searle 1969:65). Therefore, the promissory language in the Beatitudes can transform situations to fit with the eschatological blessing of promise. Such transformation could be crucial and life changing in the present.

If this is accepted, then one could ask: how then can the performative dimension of promissory language transform the world of reality? Language can bring the world of reality into what has been spoken. When Jesus declares, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3), the utterance entails a "world-to-word" fit (Searle 1976:10-16; 1979:10-20) which should transform the world by the future course of action of the speaker. In fact, the "world-to-word fit" aspect of biblical texts arises from the content of promise in the biblical text. Divine promise as an inherent language force bridges the gap between what is and what ought to be, and it is interwoven with the themes of covenant and eschatology (Thiselton 2006a:92). Thus, the language of promise shows the cognitive propositional meaning in the text and its illocutionary act regarding the notion of covenant and of eschatology which has the power to do something in accordance with language force and purpose. In this sense, the performative aspect of the biblical language of promise points to divine action, which renders the truth of God in the believing community a reality in contemporary life and acts as a standard for the life of faith in practical ways.

#### **2.4.2 Religious linguistic characteristics of the Kingdom of God as language of warning in the Parable of the Sower**

Jesus told the parables of the kingdom of God for particular reasons. His words were intended to produce action in the believing community and help them to follow God's will. The language of Jesus about the kingdom of God creates a new world of reality for the believers (hearers). The hearer does not merely observe this world as a spectator but becomes an active participant, and a respondent, who shares God's perspectives through the performative dimension of the force of biblical language. Thiselton (1970:445) points out the relationship between the hearer and the world of the parables as follows:



When a hearer enters the ‘world’ of the parable and of its language, new horizons of meaning come to view which may expose him to unexpected verdicts. If he *believes* the words of Jesus, he accepts his place in this ‘world’, and strives to readjust his own horizon until *his* world is also the world of Jesus (*his italics*).

For example, the Parable of the Sower<sup>50</sup> implies that there is an appropriate response to the message, since the performative dimension of the narrative is couched in language of warning. The statements “Listen!” and “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!” (Mk 4:9; Lk 8:8) are crucial indicators<sup>51</sup> for the hearer to pay attention to the speaker’s specific purpose, which is not just an utterance of warning, but a requisite for the hearer to do something when it comes to what is being said. This language performs an illocutionary act which has a certain conventional force that under certain conditions constitutes the issuing of a warning. In performative biblical language, the aspect of an illocutionary act helps to bring the world into conformity with the purposes of God.

According to Searle (1969:43), to say that *a speaker S meant something by X is to say that S intended the utterance of X to produce some effect in a hearer H by means of the recognition of this intention*. This suggests that by simply saying the appropriate words, the speaker, exercising authority, brings about a conventional or institutional state of affairs (Evans 1963:33). In other words, the performative aspect of a statement of a warning results in the undertaking of an obligation which takes place within conventional rules in the community. In performative biblical language, the goal of the language of warning is not to threaten the hearer, but to enable him or her to act wisely in accordance with God’s intended desire. As High (1967:150) has noted, “Believing is not describing something... it is doing something.” This

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<sup>50</sup> See Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-9 and Luke 8:1-10. The Parable of the Sower is seen as a prophetic tool to warn, confront, and instruct people to hear God’s message and respond appropriately. The parable of the sower shows that sometimes seeds sown and are unfruitful and in some other cases, they are fruitful. The seed sown on each soil is identified as “the word of the kingdom,” thereby showing that this is a kingdom parable. The point is that under certain circumstances, seeds that are sown in a field are subject to hostile realities such as birds, scorching sun, and thorns. However, the last seed falls on good soil and produces thirty, sixty or a hundred fold harvest. The one who receives the seed is said to be the one who hears the word and understands it. Understanding results in a proper response of conduct; hearing not only means the understanding of utterances but doing something in response to the speaker’s words. The fruit does not refer merely to productivity but also to maturity. The seed keeps producing (*edidou*, an imperfect tense), but the high yield may also be an allusion to eschatological fulfilment (Hagner 2000: 104).

<sup>51</sup> In the context of warning, Isaiah 6:9-10 provides essential insight into the interpretation of the Parable of the Sower (Foster & Shiell 1997:259).

shows that the hearer reacts to the performative dimension of the biblical word of warning, and by believing in the word of God as divine authority or force, it would become true as a feasible covenant. Therefore, it is important to understand certain kinds of effects that the speaker's message has on his/her hearer.

In this sense, the hearer's response to the message of the kingdom takes the form of *hearing*, *understanding*, and *doing* (Mt 13: 23; Mk 4:20; Lk 8:15). The order of the verbs is instructive, as Bruner (1990:495) notes:

But the seed sown on the good earth is the person who *listening* to the Word *understands* it; this person of course bears fruit and *does* things (Mt 13:23). Hearing comes first ("faith comes by *hearing*," Rom 10:17), understanding comes next (Matthew's special way of describing true faith), and the doing of fruit bearing then naturally (*de* "of course"! ) follows (*his italics*).

Within the framework of the argument of this research, it is contended that the Parable of the Sower is a parable related to the kingdom. It is about how to hear, how to understand without distorting the speaker's purpose, and how to act in accordance with the message.<sup>52</sup> Hearing requires openness and receptivity – openness to God and a willingness to hear and obey, which is the opposite of a hard heart. Without openness and the willingness to obey, the required hearing is impossible (Snodgrass 2013:286). To put this point more precisely, to hear means that the hearer clearly understands the speaker's intent according to the performative dimension of the language force, and fits his or her action to the words of the speaker. In other words, "to hear" means "to obey". True hearing leads to obedience to the speaker's request. Therefore, the meaning of hearing does not lie merely in hearing, but in hearing that leads to action in accordance with the illocutionary act as performative language.

The concern for the kingdom is obvious in Jesus' statement that the "secret" of the kingdom is revealed to God's people and not to outsiders. "Mystery" (secret) in the Semitic context does not refer to what is unknown, but to a special form of knowledge, indeed a revelation, from

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<sup>52</sup> In Mark, the parable begins and ends with a focus on hearing while Matthew uses the word *akouein* fifteen times as well as the verb *sunienai* (understand) in 13:13, 14, 15, 19, 23, 51 (Snodgrass 2008:152). Matthew asks, "Do you really understand with your heart?" while Mark asks, "Do you really hear Jesus' message?" Luke also uses the term *akouein* nine times and adds that "the seed (the word) is the word of God" (8:11).

God (Brown 1968:31-35). The parable hides in order to reveal (Boucher 1977:53; Wright 1996:174-182). The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom was revealed to the people of God but hidden from other people. In other words, the presence of the kingdom of God was revealed to those who heard and responded to the word thus enabling them attain the kingdom in the present world. This implies that *the words of Jesus constitute institutional facts having divine authority and force on the state of affairs within the Christian community, and should govern its patterns of behaviour in contemporary life*. The words of Jesus perform acts according to certain rules of God's particular purpose, and the people of God receive his words as a divine force<sup>53</sup> in the forms of warning, command and advice, which take effect within their communities as a new reality (in accordance with the sayings of Jesus). What Jesus said, how he acted, and how he helped the people to understand and respond to his teaching and preaching, continue to affect the world today.

Thus, the faith community needs to recognise the words of Jesus as God's authoritative performative action through the inherent language characteristics as a performative dimension of biblical language. It should be noted that language and words are not neutral carriers of meaning. Rather, they are effective and accomplish something (Austin 1975:6; Searle 1969:12). The performative aspect of biblical language refers to the mystery of divine action, which reveals the truth of God's word in human history in a new way. Language creates a world, and Jesus' proclamation of the presence of the kingdom opens a new reality within us. The concept of the mystery of the kingdom in this parable has to do with the reception of the message by the confessing community.<sup>54</sup> The fact that the good soil produces good fruit encourages believers to hear and understand the word of the kingdom, to do the work of the kingdom, and to bear fruit. The Parable of the Sower offers a powerful challenge to believers (hearers) in the

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<sup>53</sup> For a detailed, and very helpful discussion, of the relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity, Biblical revelation, and God's divine force in human life please see Migliore, Daniel L. (2008). *The Power of God and the gods of Power*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, and Migliore, Daniel L. (2004). *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Second Edition. Grand Rapid, Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company. This concept will be considered in considerable detail on chapter 4 of this dissertation.

<sup>54</sup> Boucher (1977:83) asserts that, "The mystery has to do entirely with one's willingness to receive the eschatological and ethical teaching of Jesus." Keener (1999:38) also observes that, "The only conversations that count in the kingdom are those confirmed by a life of discipleship."

warnings “Listen!” and “Those who have ears to hear, let them hear!” These warnings could help them to establish God’s kingdom in ordinary life as God’s disciples, because, “[t]he one who is spiritually illumined is the one who bears fruit for God” (Toussaint 1964:353).

### **2.4.3 Religious linguistic characteristics of the Kingdom of God as language of exhortation in the Parable of the Ten Virgins**

The Gospel of Matthew suggests that the statement, “Jesus is Lord, King and Messiah” points to Jesus’ specific institutional position, and role, under God’s sovereignty that would prepare God’s people for the consummation and realisation of the kingdom of God in the fullness of time. The concern for the kingdom requires a sense of responsibility and accountability to God by believers through the performative dimension of the language of exhortation in the biblical text. This language is closely linked to Christological language, that is, messianic language in accordance with the performative language force. Messianic language shows Jesus’ identity, authority, and status, in performative statements which are able to do something to the believers in an illocutionary act of exhortation. Like the language of warning in the biblical text, the language of exhortation/recommendation contains a command word which refers to the end of time and from which the designation “eschatological” comes.<sup>55</sup> This offers guidelines about how to live, what to do, and what we as Christians ought to be in our daily lives as we hope for the future which is not yet fulfilled, in terms of the yet unseen goal and prepare for the end of the age.

Jesus is seen as the bridegroom of the people of God in the narrative sequence in the Parable of the Ten Virgins. In this parable, Jesus is regarded as Lord and bridegroom (France 2000:181), which points to Jesus’ messianic character. According to Thiselton (2006a:76-81), it can be demonstrated that the words of Jesus in his narrative texts are speech acts with an illocutionary point such as exercitive, directive and verdictive. For example, Jesus says, “My son, your sins are [hereby] forgiven” (Mk 2:5; Mt 9:2; Lk 5:20); “Peace! Be still” (Mk 4:35-41; Mt 8:23-27;

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<sup>55</sup> The designation “eschatological” is used to describe the end-time in order to arouse the feeling of the imminence of a crisis and the need to make an urgent decision to change one’s life (Ricoeur 1981:165).

Lk 8:22-25); “Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour” (Mt 25:13). In this perspective, the purpose of the speaker leads to the illocutionary act, and the illocutionary act in Jesus’ saying can be ascribed to his identity as well as the specific state of affairs in each narrative. That is to say, the identity of Jesus should “govern interpretation of conventional ‘messianic’ language, rather than that ready-made assumptions about the meaning of such language should govern an understanding of Jesus” (Thiselton 2006a:80).

Furthermore, this parable links the watchfulness of the believers, for the day or the hour of the Lord, to the performative aspect of language of exhortation<sup>56</sup> (Kümmel 1957:54-59; Marshall 1963:40-43; Gundry 1994:500-502). The statements, “Lord, Lord, open to us (11)”, “Truly I tell you, I do not know you (12)”. “Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour (13)” contain typical Christological language and point to the hearers’ responsibility to respond in a proper manner to the statements of the speaker. To grasp the speaker’s intention, the hearer should distinguish between what is “said” (as a propositional meaning) and the illocutionary act of an utterance in which an act is performed through an utterance. In this sense, the propositional content refers only to a fact or situation without engaging its meaning. For instance, the foolish virgins got to the wedding celebration too late, the door was closed, and they ask, “Lord, open for us”; but he does not. Rather, he says, “Truly I tell you, I do not know you. Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.” On the other hand, the illocutionary act of an utterance indicates that the performance of an act which says something has the force of what we do by speaking according to the performative dimension of language. In this case, it means that we must “be prepared” for the coming kingdom as Christians who do what they ought to do.<sup>57</sup>

In the parable of the virgins, the “wise virgins” symbolise readiness, watchfulness and faithfulness, which can be regarded as synonymous with maturity and with being true

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<sup>56</sup> The language of warning has a different meaning from the language of exhortation. The language of warning requires the attention of the hearer, but the words of exhortation offer suggestions about doing something.

<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Campbell (2000:39) argues that the words of Jesus contain the most significant prophetic parables about the coming kingdom and the believer’s sense of responsibility to God is captured in the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

Christians (cf. Henry 1961:372).<sup>58</sup> To live as a wise virgin means to be prepared for God's reign or kingdom by living in ways that conform to the character of the kingdom and being faithful at all times (Snodgrass 2008:518). Genuine faith is characterised by the fact that it lives by the power of the resurrection of the crucified Jesus, and longs after the promise of the universal future of Christ's coming (Moltmann 1967:15-16). Christian faith in Jesus Christ also requires a longing for God's complete sovereignty. Moreover, it longs to be an active participant, and not just a spectator, in the world. Readiness and watchfulness are not passive traits but enable one to act positively and actively in accordance with the words of Jesus. This point implies that the believer should live their everyday life based on a true Christian identity and in readiness as taught in the language of exhortation/recommendation from God to God's people such as, "Keep awake".

Christians who are kingdom people are like "wise virgins". Being a wise virgin is not a matter of what we do or what we ought to do. Rather, it is absolutely a matter of what we are. Knowing what we are helps remind us of what we ought to do – how we should prepare for the kingdom as Christians. The wise virgins knew exactly what they were doing because they were genuine believers who acted in readiness, watchfulness and faithfulness and who hoped for the coming of the kingdom of God. Thus, the question of what we believe, or how to live, in our contemporary life precedes what we ought to do before God and people, or how we ought to act based on our faith.

Interestingly, even though this text speaks about the "wedding banquet", which is central to the

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<sup>58</sup> This parable encourages Christians to grow to maturity in their spiritual life. A mature Christian prepares for the kingdom of God with readiness and watchfulness. The term virgin refers to the believer, and the bridesmaids are divided into two groups – "wise" and "foolish." The virgins all waited for the bridegroom and took their lamps but the foolish ones did not take oil with them; only the wise took extra oil in their jars with their lamps. While the foolish virgins went to buy oil, the bridegroom came. The wise virgins went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was shut. The foolish virgins returned and asked the bridegroom to "open the door", but he did not. Rather, he said, "Truly I tell you, I do not know you. Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." This shows the importance of readiness in the life of the believer. All ten virgins had lamps but this is not the central issue in this text. The point is about the preparedness; they should have taken extra oil along. Alford (1980:249) argues that the foolish virgins represent a dead faith having only the lamp without the sufficient oil. We must remember that only the wise virgins who prepared extra oil could join the bridegroom at the wedding feast, which means the believers should be ready at all times with watchfulness.

wedding feast of the bride and bridegroom, the parable does not mention the “bride”. Alford (1980:248) points out that the Bible refers to the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14 and to that of the virgins in Matthew 25. However, “[i]n both wedding parables the bride does not appear – for she, being the Church, is in fact the aggregate of the guests in the one case, and of the companions in the other.”<sup>59</sup> This observation suggests that the virgins represent the bride and the Church, that is, the believing community. The messages about the kingdom of God in Jesus’ teaching and preaching are actualised only within the Christian community. Jesus’ parables about the kingdom were meant for the people of God and not those on the outside; this indicates that the words of Jesus constitute institutional facts that have divine force to attain patterns of behaviour for our daily lives. There are to be lived according to the performative dimension of biblical language within the confessing community. In the performative dimension of biblical communication, it can be argued that what is spoken creates what will be, as in, “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3) and “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her” (Jn 8:7). In this regard, the performative dimension of the words of Jesus produces a new reality of the world and enables believers to do something (to act, or make choices, or live moral lives), through the inherent language force in the words of Jesus. Therefore, all genuinely performative statements aim to produce something in the community and society, and not simply describe the state of affairs they represent which constitutes their propositional content (Searle 1979:18).

#### **2.4.4 An Example – Religious linguistic characteristics of the Kingdom of God as inherent performative biblical language in Matthew 7:1-6 in the Greek text**

Matthew 7:1-6 is prone to esoteric interpretations because of verse 6. It is a part of the Sermon on the Mount which focusses on the Gospel, i.e., the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus which shows that “Jesus is Lord, son of God, King and Messiah”. Some interpreters emphasise the ethical implications of this pericope for the Christian community. However, the teaching

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<sup>59</sup> According to Lange (1978:248), “The virgins are not merely companions of the bride, but representatives of the bride, the Church... The Church, in her aggregate and ideal unity, is the bride; the members of the Church, as individually called, are guests; in their separation from the world, and expectation of the Lord’s coming, they are His virgins.”



and practices of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount are routinely ignored or misinterpreted in the preaching and teaching ministry of the churches, and in Christian scholarship on Christian ethics, even though Christian ethics focuses on Jesus and his teaching, since he is the author of the kingdom of God (Stassen & Gushee 2003:11-13).

To interpret the given text more fully, we should consider some features of the inherent performative biblical language in Scriptures since the revelation of God's will, and the statements of Jesus, are closely linked to the divine force and authority of God. It becomes true (a reality) as a feasible covenant between God and believers, enabling them to do God's will and further God's kingdom in their present lives. In other words, within the hermeneutical task, who the speaker is in the passage is more important than what is communicated (content) in the text, because the speaker's specific position and status indicate the speaker's particular intention, which in turn lends meaning to the text. The meaning gets the hearer/reader to do something, to respond appropriately as they recognise the communicative intent of the text. In this sense, finding whom the speaker is (identity), why the speaker made the statement, and what the speaker's purpose is through the inherent performative biblical language, is a good starting point for discovering a more textured meaning of the text and interpreting it more fully.<sup>60</sup>

Many scholars argue that the aim of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is to teach his followers how to live the fullest lives possible in this world. Moreover, it is contended that it is about discipleship and the disciple's attitudes to one another from the perspective of what we could classify as Christian social ethics, seeking ethical perfection (Hagner 1997:45, 53; Stassen & Gushee 2003:11; Liroy 2004:197). Many scholars also agree that this passage (vv.1-5 in some cases including v.6) points to the disciples' kingdom life and how they are to relate to others in

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<sup>60</sup> Vanhoozer (1997:139) argues that, "Hermeneutics is inextricably linked to Christology." This means that the presence of the kingdom refers to God's self, and it is clearly linked to God's intent which shows God's redemptive work through the Jesus, the Messiah; that is, it demonstrates why God reveals God's self to God's people and the purpose of the kingdom of God. In relation to the kingdom, the Gospel has to do with the great divine work of salvation in Jesus Christ (Ridderbos 1962:354; Hunsberger 2015:62-63) and, Jesus is the saviour who makes God's sovereignty and the kingdom of God a reality (Brunner 1962: 365-366; Snyder 1991:147-149).



the confessing community<sup>61</sup> with love and forgiveness, and by not judging others (France 1985:142-143; Hagner 1993:167-170; Arnold 2002:500-51; Luz, Crouch & Koester 2007:349-353; Osborne & Arnold 2010:255-259).<sup>62</sup> What is relatively uncontested is that the Sermon on the Mount, is concerned with the believer's moral life. However, that is not all that it is concerned with, and it cannot be said that this is the whole purpose of Jesus' Sermon. Rather, Jesus' aim is to proclaim the kingdom of God (the Gospel) by declaring himself as Messiah, or implying by his deeds and sayings that he is the Messiah, the son of God and Lord; he does this by using religious language, and messianic words (cf. Boring & Craddock 2004:25, Matera 2013:12).<sup>63</sup>

The use of messianic language shows Jesus' identity, authority and status in the performative statements, and it can do something to the hearer/reader through the illocutionary messianic force. Hence, within this hermeneutic framework, an aim of Jesus' sermon is to declare the kingdom of God by identifying himself as the Messiah, the son of God, which in turn relates the Christian ethical content to the confessing community. The narrative does not engage the moral dimension from the beginning but first focusses on the kingdom itself. This view is crucial to interpreting Matthew 7:1-6, which will be considered in terms of the inherent performative biblical language in the Greek text, and Jesus' intention by revealing himself as the Messiah, the son of God, and the Lord. Additionally, the structure of the proposition (locution) level demonstrates the illocutionary force in the text as well as literary features such as oral/aural phenomena in exploring the dynamics of the linguistic activity and their effects. These will be considered as follows.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Luz, Crouch and Koester (2007:349) argue that the term "brother" shows clearly that the text is speaking about the community.

<sup>62</sup> Generally, most scholars (Hagner 1993:170-172; Luz, Crouch & Koester 2007:354-356; Osborne & Arnold 2010:257-260) regard verse 6 as a puzzle or a restraint in sharing the Gospel.

<sup>63</sup> This is not to say that the Sermon on the Mount has an ethical component, but that it should be more focused on the character of biblical language, that is, the words of Jesus.

<sup>64</sup> This is my own translation of the Greek text.

A<sub>1</sub> **Μὴ κρίνετε,**

Do not judge,

**ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε·**

*so that* you may not be judged.

B

ἐν ᾧ γὰρ κρίματι κρίνετε κριθήσεσθε,  
For with the judgment you make you will be judged,

καὶ ἐν ᾧ μέτρῳ μετρεῖτε μετρηθήσεται ὑμῖν.

and the measure you give will be the measure you get.

C<sub>1</sub> τί δὲ βλέπεις τὸ κάρφος τὸ ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου,

Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye,

τὴν δὲ ἐν τῷ σῷ ὀφθαλμῷ δοκὸν οὐ κατανοεῖς;

but do not notice the log in your own eye?

C<sub>2</sub> ἢ πῶς ἐρεῖς τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου· ἄφες ἐκβάλω τὸ κάρφος ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ σου,

Or *how* can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,

καὶ ἰδοὺ ἡ δοκὸς ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ σου;

and behold, the log in your own eye?

B<sub>2</sub> **ὕποκριτά,** ἐκβαλε πρῶτον ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ σου τὴν δοκόν,

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye,

καὶ τότε διαβλέψεις ἐκβαλεῖν τὸ κάρφος ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου.

and then, you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

A<sub>2</sub> **Μὴ δώτε τὸ ἅγιον τοῖς κυσὶν μηδὲ βάλητε τοὺς μαργαρίτας ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν χοίρων,**

Do not give what is holy to the dogs; and do not throw your pearls before the swine,

**μήποτε καταπατήσουσιν αὐτοὺς ἐν τοῖς ποσὶν αὐτῶν καὶ στραφέντες ῥήξωσιν ὑμᾶς.**

*otherwise, they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.*

The passage is composed of two parts – the first part (vv.1-5) is Jesus’ teaching and preaching, while the second part (v. 6) is a short parable. The contents of the teachings are “do not judge” and “do not see the speck”, and in the parable, we have “do not throw what is holy” and “do not throw the pearls”. It is possible to establish a correspondence between judging and the holy thing, and between beholding the speck and the pearls, respectively. In other words, “do not judge” and “do not see the speck”, “the holy things” and “the pearls” may have relevance to each other in a synonymous way. In this case, it can be shown that the one who judges others and observes other people’s failings (the speck) is the hypocrite mentioned in verse 5.<sup>65</sup> Thus, it can be assumed that the hypocrite refers to the hearers in verse 6, and Jesus reveals himself to them as the Messiah, the son of God, and Lord by using messianic words that would be familiar in their religious language. Theologically speaking, the term “judgement”<sup>66</sup> counts as God’s divine Word which is closely linked to the Messiah, who is the judge in Isaiah 42:4,<sup>67</sup> and the Word of God, is Jesus who comes at the end of the age. Jesus becomes the Word of God (Goble 1986:8), and accomplishes the intentions of the Word of God simply by uttering these statements. Similar sentiments are echoed especially in John 5:22<sup>68</sup>, 9:39<sup>69</sup> and 12:47-50<sup>70</sup> where Jesus is described as the Messiah, the son of God and judge, respectively.

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<sup>65</sup> Here, the subject “You” is in the vocative.

<sup>66</sup> According to France (1985:142), in this text, “Judge often carries the connotation ‘condemn’, and it is in that sense that it is used here...This passage, however, is concerned with the fault-finding, condemnatory attitude which is too often combined with a blindness to one’s own failings. But the passive, as often in Matthew, probably conceals God himself as the agent. Just as he will forgive those who forgive (6:14-14), he will condemn those who condemn...It occurs commonly in Jewish literature to indicate divine retribution” (e.g. Mishnah *Sotah* 1:7). Similarly, Osborne and Arnold (2010:258) argue that this text “is a divine passive; God will judge the judgmental person. As throughout the Sermon, there is an inaugurated thrust. You will be under divine judgment not, but especially at the final judgment.”

<sup>67</sup> “He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching.”

<sup>68</sup> “The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the son.”

<sup>69</sup> “I came into this world for judgment.”

<sup>70</sup> “I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me.”

The structure of this biblical text on the propositional level distinctly demonstrates coherent “textual unity”.<sup>71</sup> The above verses in the Greek text highlight the phonetic elements such as the oral/aural phenomena (in bold, in colour, and underlined), the specific pragmatic factor (repeated key words or phrases) and the contrast of words or phrases (e.g. “do not judge/do not see the speck”; “do not throw what is holy/do not throw the pearls”; “the speck/the log”; “in your brother’s eye/in your own eye”; “take the log out of your own eye/take the speck out of your brother’s eye”; “holy/dogs”; “pearls/swine”). These refer to the inherent performative language in the text which shows that the language is doing something (it is active, powerful) according to Jesus’ particular intention. Moreover, the nature of the linguistic force could make the hearer react to the performative aspects of the biblical word of *warning* (illocutionary force) to do something through the intended effect produced by Jesus’ sayings. Thus, we must seriously ask the question: Is the illocutionary force of this biblical text, and its propositional elements, really intended to ensure a Christian moral life in the believing community? Is this truly a message of warning to the hypocrites in the Christian community or to the hypocrites, that is, the Pharisees or the Scribes who were Jesus’ enemies?

Language can bring the world of reality into what has been spoken, as in Jesus’ statement, “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; and do not throw your pearls before the swine, otherwise, they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you”<sup>72</sup> (v.6). This short parable can be regarded as true, having an independent reality as a divine word through Jesus’ authoritative performative action in the world which contains “world-to-words” fit (Searle 1976:10-16; 1979:10-20). Jesus’ parables create a world of reality around a simple story. His utterance, like a video, entails a performative act in speech which is to transform the world by the future course of Jesus’ action. Furthermore, the event in the parable world is paralleled with the judgment (v.1-5). Jesus actually presented himself as Messiah and Judge through the symbolic term *ῥήξωσιν* (maul) in verse 6, as in when the judge convicted “the sinner” rather than the real sinner.

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<sup>71</sup> France (1985:143) points out that verse 6 does not stand alone, “but comes appropriately here in that it qualifies the apparently absolute prohibition of ‘judgment’ in v.1.”

<sup>72</sup> I used my translation above.

Accordingly, the divine word of the performative aspect of the language of warning (ῥήξωσιν) can be seen as the cognitive propositional content in the text and its illocutionary act in relation to the notion of judgement on the Last Day. It is eschatological, having power to do something to the hearer according to the language force and intention. The word of warning about the judgement on the Last Day has implications for the kingdom of God; it leads to ethical action in the present life. In verse 6, Jesus executes his purpose, he warns the hearers of judgment through the parable that exposes the log in their eye. He tries to convince them that dogs and swine will maul them because ῥήξωσιν is a messianic phrase (it has meaning within the religious language of the day) which is synonymous with the meaning of “new wine will burst (ῥήξει) the old wineskins”<sup>73</sup> (Mk 2:22). It clearly demonstrates Jesus’ divine authority and identity as Messiah, the son of God and the Lord. It explicates the Gospel itself, and points to the kingdom of God. This parable is closely linked to the statement in Mark 2:18-22 which warned those hearers who had a fixed attitude towards tradition (Torah, Law) but ignored the spirit and meaning of the law unlike the pure in heart. Therefore, the hearers are the Pharisees and hypocrites – the adversaries of Jesus (cf. Loader 2002:32).<sup>74</sup>

At the time of Jesus, many Jews believed that God would reward those who strictly obeyed the law. Thus, they determined in detail what the law of God required and carefully followed the regulations they set out (Schnackenburg 1965:158-159). For them, the moral life was an attempt to please God through strict obedience to the law. However, Jesus denounced this view, went beyond it and refined it through a new teaching that says true obedience to God is an inward piety not an outward compliance to the law, since outward compliance to the law is not

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<sup>73</sup> See Mark 2:18-22, on the issue of fasting.

<sup>74</sup> Edwards (2002:86, 91-92) argues that the passage of Mark 2:18-22 shows a conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders, particularly the Scribes and Pharisees. “The second depicts used wineskins filled with new wine that ferments and expands, bursting the old and brittle skins (see Job 32:19). Both wine and wineskins come to ruin...The new patch and new wine are incompatible with the old cloth and wineskins; and if the attempt is made to combine them, the new substances will destroy the old. Both parables are about the relation of Jesus, of Christianity indeed, to traditional Judaism. The parables illustrate the radical posture and presumption of Jesus. Jesus is the new patch and the new wine...He honors Torah by sending the healed paralytic to make the offering required by Moses, but he is not bound by Torah; he breaks it when it impedes his ministry (2:24; 3:1-6), and he subordinates it to himself (Matt 5:17; Rom 10:4).”

genuine obedience to God. God's will for believers is to focus on establishing a good one-on-one relationships with God that would show that, "God is my father".<sup>75</sup>

On the contrary, simple obedience to laws cannot produce this kind of relationship between God and the people. If Jewish religious leaders such as the Pharisees and the Scribes were satisfied with only their outward acts,<sup>76</sup> Jesus concentrated on the unseen human acts, that is, the inward parts of human beings such as the state of the heart and one's motivation, attitude and character which help to build up strong relationships between God and the believers. Thus, Jesus was at odds with the Pharisees and the Scribes who found many reasons to attack him. He declared: "*This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines*" (Mk 7:6-7). In short, for Jesus, the moral life should depend on our response to God's demonstration of love towards us rather than our attempt to earn God's divine grace through strict obedience to the law, and this response reflects on God's reign, the Gospel and the kingdom of God.

In Jesus' engagements with the Pharisees and the Scribes, he did not seek to explain the truth of his position through logic, but "he focused on the appeal that moral truth makes to the heart. To this end he repeatedly used stories and parables, rather than logical syllogisms and elaborate intellectual proofs" (Grenz 1997:110). Returning to the parable, in v.6 if the subjects who threw pearls were hypocrites, that is, the Pharisees or the Scribes, their attack was actually directed at Jesus, the Son of God, the ultimate judge who would judge them who judged him, seeing that the Pharisees tried to judge him because he did not follow the Jewish tradition. A pearl is a hard object produced within the soft tissue of the living shell of a sea creature such as a clam or an oyster. It is often used as a metaphor for something valuable.<sup>77</sup> Although physically pearls are formed in the body of the clam, the comparison to the Pharisees implies that the pearls embodied the hypocrisy and self-deception in the depth of their hearts and deeds. Under

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<sup>75</sup> See Matthew 6:9-13.

<sup>76</sup> What was worse, Jewish religious leaders could willingly disobey the law even though outwardly they appeared to be living according to it (e.g. Corban, in Mark 7:11).

<sup>77</sup> See <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pearl>.

the Jewish religious tradition,<sup>78</sup> they strictly obeyed the regulations that had been set forth and they devised what they considered important and precious to them. In this sense, the pearls can be associated with what is holy<sup>79</sup> just as the Pharisees considered fidelity to the intricacies of the law important i.e., holy. However, it seems that the Pharisees and the Scribes had likened Jesus to pigs (swine)<sup>80</sup>. In Jewish food laws, pigs are unclean animals (Arnold 2002:50) and it was a popular insult to be compared to them (Luz, Crouch & Koester 2007:355). They saw Jesus in that light because he focused on the inward dimension of human existence rather than the outward conduct in Jewish tradition (which they valued). Accordingly, Jesus probably used the symbol of the pig himself as an illocutionary force, not only to warn them strongly, but also to persuade them about the true Gospel, the kingdom of God, his messianic authority, and moral truth. Verse 6 of the passage can be interpreted as:

Do not give your pretence and hypocrisy to me.

And do not throw your pretence and hypocrisy before me.

Otherwise, I will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.

Consequently, Matthew 7:1-6 does not merely talk about the disciples' attitude to treat one another with love and forgiveness by not judging others. Rather, it pays attention to the 'true' Gospel, the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus, which is about the God who really requires from God's people a faithful response towards God from a sincere heart – not merely a simple set of legal acts in accordance with the Jewish religious tradition.<sup>81</sup> Hence, Jesus warned the

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<sup>78</sup> Luz, Crouch and Koester (2007:355) note that, "Pearls can designate metaphorically sayings of sages or successful interpretations of the Torah." However, a number of other scholars regard "what is holy" and "pearls" as references to the Gospel (Hagner 1993:171; Arnold 2002; Osborne & Arnold 2010:259). Arnold (2002:50-51) argues that, "Pearls symbolize the value of the message of the kingdom of heaven. Something so valuable should not be given to those who have no appreciation for such precious truths, whose nature is demonstrated by their rejection of the message of the gospel."

<sup>79</sup> Betz and Collins (1995:496) insist that "holy could be a ritual" but France (1985:143) claims that, "What is holy refers probably to consecrated food, which was to be eaten only by the priests and their families" (Ex 29:33-34; Lev 22:10-16; Num 18:8-19).

<sup>80</sup> Hanger (1993:171) argues that, "Since for the Jews 'swine' are unclean animals and the term 'dog' was often used for 'Gentiles' (cf. 15:26), it is possible that this logion prohibits the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles." Similarly, Arnold (2002:51) demonstrates that "dogs and pigs are linked elsewhere in Scripture (Isa 66:3; 2 Peter 2:22) as dangerously wild and ritually unclean animals. The bizarre behaviour of wild animals produced fear because their often-intense hunger could cause them to attack humans (cf. Ps 22:16-17). Pigs and dogs were symbols of filth and paganism (cf. Isa 65:4; 66:3, 17), and the image warns disciples about the danger of those who have rejected the message of the kingdom of heaven."

<sup>81</sup> To find the meaning in the text, we should not confuse illocutionary acts (the intent of the author) and perlocutionary effects.

hypocrites who were the Pharisees and the Scribes through the performative dimension of the biblical terms “*κρίνετε* and *ρήξωσιν*”. The terms constitute the illocutionary force in speech which makes the hearers react to these statements due to their effects. This biblical text demonstrates the message of the kingdom through the messianic illocutionary force in Jesus’ statements, which entails Jesus’ identity, authority and status in the performative utterances. Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lord and the ultimate judge. This has ethical implications because Jesus, as the Messiah, proclaimed that one could only enter the kingdom of God through faith and true repentance as a proper response to God (Mk 1:15), which means a changed heart and life as well as proper devotion and love towards God (Schrage 1988:42-43).

Accordingly, the words of Jesus constitute divine performative action under God’s reign in the kingdom of God; they carry the force and energy to change the inner construct of the human heart towards God, as well as the outer construct of human attitude, to conform to God’s divine purpose as a dynamic and powerful activity. This focus on Jesus’ statements enables us to distinguish between *the meaning of what is said* and *the force of what the message of the kingdom says* in keeping with God’s inherent intention to influence the contemporary hearer/reader. According to Marshall (1947:31), “[a]ll the ethical teaching of Jesus is simply an exposition of the ethics of the kingdom of God, of the way in which men [sic] inevitably behave when they actually come under the rule of God.” In other words, Christian ethics responds rightly to the Gospel, or the Word of God. Therefore, Christian ethics should focus on the Word of God through the inherent performative biblical language in Jesus’ illocutionary acts and force which help us to understand the message without distorting God’s intention as well as showing us how to act on the message (response).

## 2.5 Summary and Conclusion of Chapter

This chapter has investigated features of the contrasting concepts of cognitive-propositional, and performative-ontological, religious language of the kingdom of God in the Bible to



discover its possible meanings and ethical implications by comparing “propositional morality ethics” (PME), “narrative ethics” (NE), and “unique linguistic nature oriented ethics” (ULNOE). We have noted that each of the three perspectives, in terms of religious language of the kingdom of God, demonstrates not only facts or statements but also meaning and meaningful acts. More precisely, a text refers to its propositional content as what is “said” but the text itself produces a meaningful act; what the text is doing (performative action), and not merely what it means (the theme). However, the question must be asked: how is the nature of inherent biblical language expressed in the history of biblical interpretation and exegesis, based on binding biblical truths or theological principles, to predict variations about the knowledge of the message of the kingdom of God for the contemporary Christian life in the tension between meaning (knowledge) and praxis (action)? To respond to this, the chapter has suggested that the ULNOE, which is the performative-ontological biblical language, be applied to the moral dimension as an alternative way of approaching the issue of Christian ethics (kingdom ethics) in the present world.

The PME in the Bible indicates a cognitive-propositional approach to the uni-dimensional level that discovers and investigates moral content based on Christian confession which presents the objective norms of life as a rational task. In PME lies an understanding of inherent biblical linguistic features, which refers to the truth or faith in the biblical proposition and its relevance to the production of meaning and to the ethical issue at hand. Thus, PME considers the information in the Bible as theological principles, and requires that Christian ethics study a certain pattern of behaviour based on rational objective laws or rules to maintain and preserve the community and its affirmations of truth. However, PME as propositional knowledge of the objective statement only relies on the content of what is said rather than on what the passage wants to do in relation to the text’s momentum toward the reader. It shows that PME in the Scriptures is about the thought-content which no longer has any influence on the inner life of the reader because it simply refers to propositional meanings as informative facts. It also has no power to do something to the reader, or cause a particular effect, since it does not touch the core of the reader.

On the other hand, NE in the biblical narrative structure shows performative language in terms of the text's momentum in the Scriptures. It indicates the effect of the experience of participating in a biblical understanding of today's context and the way in which the biblical world relates to the living experience of the faith community in the modern world. Thus, NE is not just PME, but Jesus' story itself, which performs a particular action as the ethical content of God's self communication in the performative aspect of biblical language. It also creates the identity of the community as a pattern of behaviour in ordinary life. Nonetheless, it is not enough to explain the dynamic and powerful role of the performative element of biblical language in the performance of Scripture by the people of God, or to account for the nature of biblical language in the narrative text, only. On the issue of Christian ethics, Hauerwas (1983:66, 162) notes that narrative is the medium through which God chooses to reveal God's self in self-disclosure (revelation). It means that NE could be understood as God's revelation of the knowledge of God. However, certain knowledge of the text, (as simple facts), only conveys formal information such as truth or falsehood to the reader; it has no power to do something to the reader or cause a particular effect (cf. Searle 1969:31). *God does not only reveal God's self in the sense of the knowledge of God in the Bible, but also as divine acts, such as blessing, promising, warning, exhorting, and so forth, to the people of God and for the sake of God's kingdom.*

However, the ULNOE, according to the nature of performative-ontological religious language, expresses God's divine actions such as promise, warning, and exhortation, all of which do something to the believer in line with God's self-revealing communication. That is, the performative dimension of biblical language has a certain intentionality for the Christian life (ULNOE) in accordance with a particular divine purpose that does something by communicating between God and the people of God in order to build the kingdom and execute God's will. Thus, in the ULNOE, the Christian ethical goal is to perform something about the kingdom of God, which means that the sovereign intentional acts about the kingdom promise, warn, and exhort the confessing community who are called to be God's true people or disciples in the present.

Consequently, the performative biblical language as divine force creates new realities in the contemporary believer's life and changes perceptions. From this perspective, the words of Jesus about the kingdom constitute institutional facts within the Christian community under God's reign (the kingdom of God) which have divine power and intention on the contemporary state of affairs. These words should inform the norms of the Christian life.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, the words of Jesus should be the pattern for Christian action, and his identity as Messiah, Son of God, Lord and Judge should govern the realistic content of the ethics of God's kingdom. In this regard, performative biblical language is a meaningful and intentional divine action, which is closely linked to eschatology as the language of promise, warning, and exhortation between God and God's people. It prompts one to change one's life according to the God's self communication, which in turn has an impact on how we live and what we ought to do in our contemporary lives, since it helps us to change our hearts and behaviour in relation to the communicative intention of biblical narratives. In this regard, we considered how Jesus' sayings enables us to distinguish between the *meaning* and the *force of what the message of the kingdom says*.

Performative biblical language as an inherent linguistic force leads to an engagement with Christian ethics by reconsidering the religious language of the kingdom between the cognitive-propositional model of religious language and the performative-ontological model of religious language in two areas. The first relates to *the meaning of the ethics of the kingdom* and the second to *the performance of the ethics of the kingdom*. The Christian has to consider the notion of the ethics of the kingdom as an informative proposition. The meaning of the message of the kingdom in the biblical text is the *propositional content* by which the believing community produces Christian ethics as *an approach to moral living*.

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<sup>82</sup> According to Chilton and McDonald (1987:19-20), the "performance of the kingdom" implies that Jesus manifested the reign of God in his time in the form of miracles and parables, in actions and in words. Chilton and McDonald (1987:24, 31) further stress the relationship between Jesus' parables and human action in the kingdom of God: "To read the parables is itself an acknowledgment that human action might be implicated in God's kingdom; to believe them is actually to undertake appropriate action, the parabolic action of the kingdom, in the present. Because the kingdom is of a God whose claims are absolute, it necessarily addresses itself to people as a cognitive and an ethical challenge at one and the same time."

Therefore, we should distinguish between *what the message of the kingdom intends to say* and *what it intends to do*. Jesus' sayings about the kingdom as divine words (messianic words) refer to the Gospel or the kingdom itself rather than to the Christian ethical life. Of course, the words of Jesus are concerned with Christian ethical living, but that is not all that they are about, or the whole intention of Jesus' life and words. Jesus paid attention to the proclamation of the Gospel which explicates an understanding of the God who wants God's people to love God with heart and soul and strength (Deut 6:4-5), not merely to observe strict obedience according to the law without any inward piety. This means the believers are to follow God's purpose (will) with a sincere heart and have a correct understanding of the God's self-revelation in order to offer a faithful response in the context of a strong relationship between God and the people of God. This point naturally has implications of Christian ethics for the confessing community which applies its mind to righteousness and justice.

Thus, the ethical reflection on the kingdom of God would not simply clarify the text's central theme or shape a re-narration of the story of the kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching. Rather, encountering God's kingdom is a continuous process of performing God's righteousness under God's sovereign guidance. The conviction regarding the message of the kingdom seems to stem, in a certain sense, from the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act of language.<sup>83</sup> In other words, the Christian moral content may be identified according to the illocutionary act in the message of the kingdom, which refers to what the text is doing by what it is saying. In this sense, the kingdom passages would imply that the insight from the illocutionary force has permeated Christian ethics and it should be used to rethink the notion of divine intention in terms of the illocutionary act to attain God's purpose and God's kingdom in everyday life. Hence, this ethical point may be enriched, or deepened, through the use of SAT regarding the link between the narratives and teachings of the kingdom and biblical ethics.

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<sup>83</sup> According to the speech act theory, the performative aspect of language can be identified in the following three areas when one uses the word/text – (1) The locutionary act: uttering words; (2) The illocutionary act: what we do in saying something; (3) The perlocutionary act: what we bring about by saying something (Austin 1975:98-108).

Furthermore, the performative dimension of biblical language provides an alternative criterion for evaluating Christian patterns of behaviour by focusing on how Christian ethics is understood as the performance of the illocutionary force in the message of the kingdom. It could investigate the potential contributions and the ethical implications of SAT in the Bible and possibly new biblical moral sensibilities and their specific practical directions for the hermeneutical task by observing illocutionary acts in the Scriptures. It could facilitate an ethical performance of the text in the present world by distinguishing between the *meaning of what the Bible says* (proposition) and the *force of what the Bible says* (illocution act). The next chapter will suggest a way forward with regards to the application of speech act theory in relation to Biblical ethics.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ETHICAL HERMENEUTIC METHODOLOGY AND ITS APPLICATION TO KINGDOM ETHICS IN THE LIGHT OF SPEECH ACT THEORY (SAT)

#### 3.1 Chapter Introduction

In the previous chapter, we considered the possibility of using the performative dimension of biblical language as an exegetical ethical approach based on the inherent language force of the text in the ethics of the kingdom. The method could enable us to draw moral content and its implication from the Bible according to illocutionary speech acts. This consideration seems to provide an alternative criterion for evaluating the Christian way of life in the tension between the biblical world, that is, what the Bible meant (the text) and the contemporary world, that is, what the Bible means today (praxis) in an ethical context. In other words, the ethics of the kingdom of God may be identified as the performance of Scripture by the people of God through the illocutionary act which has inherent linguistic force in Scripture. From this perspective, the performative aspect of biblical language in the text, in terms of the ethics of the kingdom, suggests that useful insights for ethical hermeneutic action from the perspective of the speech act theory (SAT)<sup>84</sup> have permeated Christian ethics and its implications. Thus, this chapter examines how biblical moral concepts create ethical meaning and performative

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<sup>84</sup> Before examining speech act theory in detail, it is pertinent to briefly identify some critique of speech act theory in its application of discourse. Mey (1998:933) argues that “One serious weakness with speech act theory has been to pretend that each U [utterance] has only one illocutionary point.” Labov & Fanshel (1977:29) explain that, “Most utterances can be seen as performing several speech acts simultaneously...Conversation is not a chain of utterances, but rather a matrix of utterances and actions bound together by a web of understandings and reactions... In conversation, participants use language to interpret to each other the significance of the actual and potential events that surround them and to draw the consequences for their past and future actions.” It has problems in that it fails to account for multiple actions in an utterance due to the fact that a single utterance may represent one certain action. Sometimes an utterance requires or implies more than one action in a discourse. This is partly true but partly false. Searle (1976:4-16) did not insist that an utterance has only one illocutionary point. Rather, he implies that illocutionary point in a single utterance can have more than one point by suggesting the organising categories of the direction of fit. Another weakness is the concern that the hearer may not know the speaker’s exact intention of that the illocutionary force (Allan 1994:4132) and may not be able to respond to something according to the utterances of the speaker. Of course, speech act theory is not a perfect theory without any challenges. But, a speech theory will help to explain that the Word of God in the bible works in believers and believers’ response to the Word of God in contemporary life as Christian moral conduct.

action by observing the illocutionary acts in the Bible, not simply talking about the content of past stories, but as the work of the ongoing self-revelation of God which aims to do something to the believing community for the sake of the kingdom of God. Based on SAT, this perspective will offer an alternative moral linguistic epistemology for ethical hermeneutic work and its performance in the context of the ethics of the kingdom of God.

The performative dimension of the kingdom in the biblical text is not only aimed at retelling the meaning of the ethics of the kingdom in the form of propositional knowledge, but also at reconstructing the Christian life as a performative force in terms of the presence of the kingdom of God and its living disciples. This leads us to investigate Biblical ethics as it emerges from a Speech Act Theory approach in relation to the presence of the kingdom of God as divine discourse. The gap between *the meaning of the ethics of the kingdom* and *the performance of the ethics of the kingdom* could be bridged through SAT. Hence, the goal of this chapter is to survey the methods and terminologies employed in SAT, particularly in the works of the so-called speech act theory pioneer J.L. Austin and his students J.R. Searle, D.D. Evans, M.L. Pratt and H.P. Grice.<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, the chapter will show how the views of these authors apply to Christian ethical theories in the context of the kingdom. Hence, the chapter endeavours to investigate the inevitable issue of ethical implication in two ways. Firstly, it will pay attention to how Christian ethics bridges the gap between the meaning of the ethics of the kingdom and the performance of the ethics of the kingdom through the inherent linguistic force of the text. Secondly, it will

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<sup>85</sup> J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975). This theory concerns itself with the performative language which seeks to explain how speaking a language is operative and has effects in ordinary communicative action. His student, J.R. Searle, offers the most comprehensive statement of SAT in *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). Another student of Austin, D.D. Evans, produced an early study in applications of the notions of SAT in relation to biblical language and hermeneutics in *The Logic of Self-Involvement: A Philosophical Study of Everyday Language with Special Reference to the Christian Use of Language about God as Creator* (London: SCM Press, 1963). M.L. Pratt created a good starting point in applying SAT to text in *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977). She (1977:136) argues that the displayed text is really doing something: “verbally displaying a state of affairs, inviting his addressee(s) to join him in contemplating it, evaluating it, and responding to it.” Another perspective was investigated by H.P. Grice, “Logic and Conversation” in *The Syntax and Semantics 3, Speech Act*. edited by P Cole and JL Morgan. (New York: Academic Press, 1957, pp.41-58). Grice developed a pragmatic approach to the idea of “conversational implicature” in the light of SAT.

examine how to refine the hermeneutic process from the Bible into Christian ethics in order to act properly as Christians who uphold and seek to live according to the Word of God (i.e., God's self-revelation of God's person and will in the Scriptures). Therefore, a SAT approach could offer new criteria for understanding Christian ethics in terms of the relationship between the biblical text and the implications that arise from the various texts and books in the Bible.

### 3.2 A Background to Speech Act Theory (SAT) – Ordinary language philosophy

The idea of SAT as the action-theoretic peculiarities of language use was developed<sup>86</sup> in an attempt to address issues with which philosophers and linguists have wrestled since the time of Aristotle. To this Burkhardt (1990:3)<sup>87</sup> states that “his well-known dismissal of any philosophical investigation of non-statement-making sentences, has prevented any theoretical insight into the phenomenon of linguistic action until the end of the 19th century.” One of such issues by Berry (2009:83) is asking, “How do the social and emotive elements intrinsic to human communication function?” However, on the question of “where the action-character of linguistic phenomena was acknowledged, it was normally regarded as a peripheral matter,

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<sup>86</sup> The scope of this project does not allow me to situate SAT fully within the broader developments and contours of the discourse on the philosophy of language. However, my aim is to show how SAT helps to bridge the gap between the message of the kingdom and its praxis in Christian ethics, not as a comprehensive philosophy of language but as a hermeneutical resource. However, for the sake of clarity, I shall provide some background for, and a brief history of, SAT at this juncture. Austin's concept of SAT began with the question of how we are to do things with words that are used in ordinary or daily life. This discourse has its roots in the works of philosophers of language who preceded Austin, for example, Wittgenstein and Searle. See also Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*. Trans. By H.P. Cook in 1938, London: Loeb Classical Library; Reid, T. (1788), *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*. London: Oxford University Press; Husserl, E. *Logical Investigations*. Trans. By J.N. Findlay in 1970, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, and for more detailed information on the history of SAT, see Smith, B. (1990) “Towards a History of Speech Act Theory” in A Burkhardt (ed.), *Speech Acts, Meaning and Intentions: Critical Approaches to the Philosophy of John R. Searle*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, pp. 29-61. It is worth noting that while Wittgenstein (1953:11-12) was neither the initiator of the Speech Act Theory nor a speech act theorist, his later philosophical work can be seen as a discourse of language use in daily life (in particular this can be seen in relation to concepts such as asking, thanking, cursing, greeting and praying, which all relate to an action). It is possible to see a correlation between his work and Austin's speech act theory, even though Austin himself was not impressed by Wittgenstein, but practised philosophy in a way which was certainly congruent with his main emphases (Hacker 1996:172-175).

<sup>87</sup> In the part on interpretation in *De interpretatione*, Aristotle (1938:121) writes: “Every sentence has meaning, though not as an instrument of nature but, as we observed, by convention, not all can be called propositions. We call propositions those only that have truth or falsity in them. A prayer is, for instance, a sentence but neither has truth nor has falsity. Let us pass over all such, as their study more properly belongs to the province of rhetoric or poetry. We have in our present inquiry propositions alone for our theme” (17 a 1-5, Cook's translation).



relating to derivative or non-standard aspects of language which could afford to be ignored” (Smith 1990:29). The action-character of language is an important aspect of language which can only be understood in a certain situation and within the circumstance of its use. This is at the heart of the view of the use of language in everyday life by ordinary language philosophers whose school of thought has its roots in Cambridge and Oxford during the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>88</sup>

A new starting point emerged from *Ordinary Language Philosophy* which opposed the idea that language was only to be used for logical analysis through mathematical logic, contra Russell (i.e., the referential theory of meaning). However, Austin argues that language should be identified based on a given culture’s perception of the world in terms of performative utterances, that is, speech acts (cf. Austin 1975). SAT is a method of analysing human language use in terms of actions and their effect in a speech performance. In short, SAT is based on the premise that to say something is to do something. This suggests that a speaker is not merely uttering sounds, words or statements, but is performing an action as language itself. A theory of language is part of a theory of action; and speaking a language is performing speech acts (Searle 1969:16-17).

This theory was propounded by Austin in “*How to Do Things with Words*” (first published in 1962), which his follower Searle later developed in his two volumes “*Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*” (1969) and “*Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*” (1979). The theory has been one of the most fruitful approaches to the biblical text.<sup>89</sup> Austin examines the effects of different kinds of utterances in conversation and other

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<sup>88</sup> For more information about the origins of ordinary philosophy, see J O Urmson, *Philosophical Analysis: Its Development between the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), chapter 11. See also D R Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol and Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>89</sup> From SAT, some theologians have consistently proposed the suitability of SAT for the various tasks of biblical interpretation and theological hermeneutics. Thiselton points out that since many biblical languages are performative, the language of the biblical text is a performative action of the text. For more information of his major contributions to SAT, see the following A.C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), pp.272-312. See also A.C. Thiselton, “The Parables as Language-Event: Some Comments on Fuchs’s Hermeneutics in the Light of Linguistic Philosophy,” in *SJT*, 23(1970), pp.437-468; idem, “The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings,” in *SJT*, 25(1974), pp.283-299; idem, “Communicative Action and Promise in Interdisciplinary, Biblical and Theological Hermeneutics,” in *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (eds. Roger Lundin, Clarence Walhout, and Anthony

speech acts between a speaker and a hearer, that is, the performative aspect of language use which contains all human conventions, customs and cultures including even non-verbal behaviour. All human words take place in a certain context or community within which certain conditions and conventional expectations operate in order to understand what the utterance is doing with what it is saying, not simply as a propositional meaning but as a meaningful action. Clark (2006:119) states that:

The fact that language does things is a more basic, more comprehensive fact about language than that it says things. Saying things about the world is one thing language does, but not the only thing it does- and not necessarily the most important thing it does... Thus, a descriptive linguistic act in a natural language generally includes other dimensions something more than the propositional content. In statement, this something more could be as important as, or even more important than, the proposition itself.

Thus, SAT primarily relates to the performative language of the original characteristics and operation of language utterance which produce certain effects as a particular response in accordance with the speaker's communication to the hearer.

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C. Thiselton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp.133-239; idem, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works with New Essays* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); idem, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2009). In addition, KJ. Vanhoozer in *Is There a Meaning in this Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) explored how human words in biblical text can be treated as divine words. For more information of his major contributions to SAT, see K.J. Vanhoozer, "God's Mighty Speech-Act: The Doctrine of Scripture Today" in *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture* (eds. P Satterthwaite and DF Wright; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), pp.143-181; idem, "The Spirit of Understanding: Special Revelation and General Hermeneutics." in *Disciplining Hermeneutics: Interpretation in Christian Perspective* (ed. R Lundin; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), pp.131-166; idem, "From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts: The Covenant of Discourse and the Discourse of Covenant." in *Frist Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), pp.159-203; idem, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), idem, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). In Wolterstorff's book, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflection on the Claim that God Speaks* (New York: Cambridge University, 1995). Wolterstorff's aim is to discover "how to go about reading a text to find out what God might have said or be saying with that text" (Wolterstorff 1995:38). This perspective entails the idea that God is a participant in human discourse based on the notion of SAT. J.E. Botha *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman. A Speech Act Reading of John 4:1-42* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991). "Botha attends to the nature of the communication between the implied author and the implied readers, analyzes the speech-acts of the narrator and the characters, and relates the categories and functions of speech-act theory to the study of the Fourth Gospel as a literary speech-act. The intention throughout is to correlate features of speech-act theory with aspects of narrative criticism and reader-response criticism" (Tovey 1997:29). D. Tovey *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). His interest is in the application of SAT to an understanding of the nature and description of the literary speech situation. He insists that, "Speech-act theory furnishes useful tools of analysis" (Tovey 1997:30). D. Neufeld *Reconceiving Text as Speech Acts: An Analysis of 1 John. Biblical Interpretation Monograph Series 7* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1994). Neufeld proposes Christological confessions and ethical exhortations. He notes that, "The Christological confessions and ethical exhortations may be viewed as *written effective acts* intended to change the content of the reader's confessions in order to bring about a proper alignment of speech and conduct" (Neufeld 1994:41, *his emphasis*).

### 3.2.1 J L Austin's Speech Act Theory – “How to Do Things with Words”

Austin (1975:1-5) argues that linguistic philosophy had focused too much on words in the text as propositional meaning rather than on sentences based on the text's illocutionary action and force as meaning. He means that, traditionally, the study of language paid attention to whether language was true or false. However, it is not enough to explain meanings in the text or utterance in real-life situations. For example, in the actual circumstance in which the statement, “There is a cup on the table” is made, the utterance is definitely true because the situation actually exists, and it is a syntactically correct sentence. It can be expressed as a constative utterance which describes some state of affairs or facts. In this sense, the logical form as a reason produces meanings as propositional elements, but these merely refer to simple facts in the description. However, in another case, the utterance, “The cup is on the table but I do not think so”, may be a syntactically correct sentence as the study of the grammatical form of a sentence and the propositional dimension are concerned, yet it is nonsensical—it is semantically incorrect. This means that the fact that a syntactically correct sentence is true or false may not always be sufficient in determining meaning. One does not also say that, “The table is under the cup.” What do these mean? These show that a specific situation in which we say something is as important as the words themselves – since the propositional meaning in the text also contains a specific human system, and it helps to discover and make meaning of the text or utterance more clearly in ordinary life. Austin (1975:14-15) notes that:

There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and... the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

Furthermore, a particular purpose is conveyed according to the statement of the speaker to the hearer and produces a particular response in the hearer – what we say, when, why and what we should mean by it in certain circumstances and specific speech contexts in the present life. This distinction in the use of language indicates that the meaning of a word or sentence lies in a particular situation in accordance with a certain human convention (a rule agreed on by the community) for its actual use in a real-life situation which is shared by a community of speakers.

Thus, speaking is a form of action in a particular situation because it delivers the speaker's specific purpose to the hearer. This leads us to ask, what types of acts should we perform by speaking? Austin offers a clue to this question in his book, *"How to Do Things with Words."* Austin's main point is that speaking a language is also a kind of doing; many utterances are performative (e.g. "I apologize"; "I promise"). The performative utterance can be identified also as a performative sentence. He classifies utterances in two ways, namely constative utterances and performative utterances. While the constative utterance describes some state of affairs or informative fact as true or false, the performative utterance is a performative utterance act.

However, Austin (1975:4-5) notes that the "constative" in language use performs a particular action just as the performative utterance does. This occurs in utterances such as "I do" (in a marriage ceremony), "I give and bequeath my watch to my brother" (in a will), or "I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow" (in a bet). Again, when before the registrar of marriages, or at the altar, one says, "I do", it means one is not reporting on the marriage ceremony but participating in it (Austin 1975:6). This indicates that both performative and constative utterances are similar in that they are both actions in speech:

In these examples it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or state that I am doing it: it is to do it. (Austin 1975:6, *his emphasis*).

The utterance is the performing of an action which shows that speaking a language implies a performative action rather than referring to a specific state of affairs or set of facts, that is to say, statements do something. This distinction as the performative-constative in its actual use in the appropriate circumstances ultimately suggests three important non-verbal behaviours behind the nature of language – how to do things with words when we say something in ordinary life.

First, Austin (1975:14) explains the "doctrine of the infelicities", i.e., that things can be and go wrong on the occasion of such utterances. This can be seen as "misfires", an "unhappy" situation or "abuse" in which a performative linguistic action occurs (Austin 1975:14-20).

Austin (1975:13-14) clarifies this point as follows:

To utter the words ‘I bet’: someone might do that all right, and yet we might still not agree that he had in fact, or at least entirely, succeeded in betting. To satisfy ourselves of this, we have only, for example, to announce our bet after the race is over. Besides the uttering of the words of the so-called performative, a good many other things have as a general rule to be right and to go right if we are to be said to have happily brought off our action.

Thus, a specific situation is appropriated in which a performative action with words is the inadequate assessment (being unhappy) when it turns into “misfires” or “abuse”, and these kinds of failings in the utterance can also apply to constatives or performatives (Austin 1975:14-20). For instance, the “misfiring” in question is only purported; it does not properly occur (e.g. someone who is not entitled to name a ship does so); or there can be “abuse” where the act is achieved but not properly (e.g. an insincere promise) (see Briggs 2001a:39). Therefore, the performative is a matter of being happy or unhappy as opposed to a situation being true or false which can also do something rather than just say something (Austin 1975:132).<sup>90</sup>

Secondly, Austin considers the convention that is associated with a performative utterance in a specific speech situation. An action means doing something with words in a certain community (circumstances) which is always closely related to conventional relationships in a community of speakers between *saying x (with doing)* and *bring about y* according to a particular purpose. It can be coded as – saying *x* is counted as *y* under the factual circumstance *z* (see Brümmer 2006:113). In this view, Acts 2:21, for example, can be expressed as “One who is calling the name of the Lord is counted as having salvation under the factual circumstance of the promises of God.”<sup>91</sup>

Lastly, the particular intentions and purpose are performed according to the utterance of certain words in everyday life between the speaker and the hearer. Austin (1975:15) states that:

The procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the

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<sup>90</sup> According to Botha (1991:64), in the distinction between doing and saying, whereas constatives can be judged merely in terms of being either true or false, speech acts or performatives are to be judged in terms of their success. The terms used for this evaluation include felicitous/infelicitous, happy/unhappy, appropriate/inappropriate, effective/ineffective, and so forth.

<sup>91</sup> “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).

inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves and further must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.

Therefore, speaking a language is a form of intentional action with a certain purpose for the hearer which is closely linked to the issue of how to do things with words. This means that when we say something we are basically doing something in accordance with a particular intention which produces a specific response. This point could offer new insight into hermeneutical tasks when we reconsider the illocutionary action in saying something, that is, the intentional action and purpose in what is being done including extra-linguistic perspectives or non-verbal behaviour in a convention in order to discover meanings in the text or utterance.

### **3.2.2 Austin's primary contribution to SAT – Locution (Proposition), Illocution (Force), and Perlocution (Intended Effect)**

Austin (1975:94-107) argues that in terms of the performative utterance, three action structures should be distinguished in speech, namely the locutionary, the illocutionary, and the perlocutionary acts. In other words, when we speak, the performative dimension of language entails three possible acts which relate to the question, "What kinds of acts do we perform in ordinary life?" This means that human language analyses the relationship between the performative language and real life situations in terms of human action.

In a certain sense, the locution is basic to the performative act which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense (Austin 1975:108). It is the performative act which produces a coherent and acceptable grammatical form of utterance at the *propositional level* and it can be divided into the phonetic act, the phatic act, and the rhetic act. Austin (1975:95) distinguishes these acts in the following statements:

The *phonetic* act is merely the act of uttering certain noises. The *phatic* act is the uttering of certain vocables or words, i.e. noises of certain types, belonging to and as belonging to, a certain vocabulary, conforming to and as conforming to a certain grammar. The *rhetic* act is the performance of an act of using those vocables with a certain more-or-less definite sense

and reference (*my emphasis*).

The locutionary act is the performance of the act of saying something which presents itself at the level of utterance. This is closely linked to the surface of the utterance in terms of the propositional element or meaning, such as vocabulary and grammar, which demonstrate what has been said or written. The propositional dimensions contain the information to be communicated between a speaker/text and a hearer/reader.

The illocutionary act, on the other hand, is the performance of an act in saying something as opposed to the performance of an act of saying something (Austin 1975:99). It is the performative act of producing an utterance with a particular (conventional) illocutionary *force* (Austin 1975:100). This only takes place within a conventional rule such as a given community because the illocutionary act serves as institutional force (procedure) influencing what we do in saying something. The intent of the speaker in the language act is communicated in the form of an intentional act in accordance with the speaker's specific intent to promise, warn, and exhort the hearer to act in a certain way through language.

Lastly, the perlocutionary act<sup>92</sup> is “what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading” (Austin 1975:109). It is the performative act by which the speaker accomplishes a particular *intended effect* in the hearer. Stated differently, “saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons,” and an act of speech which is performed in this way is termed a perlocutionary act (Austin 1975:101). It responds to the speaker's utterance according to the illocutionary act as the obtained effect of what has been said on the hearer. Austin (1975:101)

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<sup>92</sup> Austin (1975:101) explains that in the perlocutionary act, “Saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons: and it may be done with the design, intention, or purpose of producing them; and we may then say, thinking of this, that the speaker has performed an act in the nomenclature of which... to the performance of the locutionary or illocutionary act. We shall call the performance of an act of this kind the performance of a *perlocutionary act or perlocution*” (*his italics*).



further demonstrates the differences between these three linguistic forces as follows:

Act (A) or Locution

He said to me ‘Shoot her!’ meaning by ‘shoot’, shoot and referring by ‘her’ to her.

Act (B) or Illocution

He urged (or advised, ordered, &c.) me to shoot her.

Act (C.a) or Perlocution

He persuaded me to shoot her.

Act (C.b)

He got me to (or made me &c.) shoot her.

As mentioned earlier, the locutionary act only refers to propositional elements with propositional meaning in a grammar or sentence while the illocutionary act<sup>93</sup> is the force of the speaker’s utterance to do something to the hearer or cause a particular effect. That is to say, the illocutionary force creates the perlocutionary act through the hearer’s response to the speaker’s utterance which for example has the effect of persuading the hearer (B,C). Precisely, the locution act has to do with a sign system, words themselves (*langue*), the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act have to do with sentences, with language in action (*parole*).<sup>94</sup> The

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<sup>93</sup> Austin (1975:150-151) identifies five kinds of illocutionary actions namely verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives: (1) The verdictives have to do with the issuing of a verdict (e.g., to estimate, reckon and appraise); (2) The exercitives relate to the exercise of powers, rights and influence (e.g., to appoint, vote, order, urge, advise, and warn); (3) The commissives entail promises that you commit to do something; (4) The behabitives have to do with attitudes and social behaviour (e.g., apologizing, congratulating, commending, condoling, cursing and challenging); and (5) The expositives explain how we use words (e.g., “I reply,” “I argue,” “I concede,” and “I postulate.”).

<sup>94</sup> The idea of *langue* and *parole* was propounded by Ferdinand de Saussure (1916). His ideas that “Language is divided into *langue* and *parole*, roughly, grammar and speech that every morpheme has two parts, its meaning/grammatical function and its form, and that the relation between the meaning of a word and its form are arbitrary” (Krämer 2012:12). For Saussure, *parole* signified everyday language as the individual speech act, and *langue* linked to the linguistic system as a structure within which individual speech acts to use language. Ricoeur (1974:70-71) accepted the views of Saussure in order to interpret the text. For Ricoeur “The conventions presupposed in the use of language at a given point (*langue*) are privileged above the speech-acts of individual



issue is about what one is doing when saying something and what effect the act of saying something has on the hearer. In other words, implied also in the relationship between the meaning of *what one says* and *the force of what one says* (cf. Austin 1975:108) is the idea that the *speaker is a doer as an agent* because the speaker supplies the force in saying something which relates the speaker's role to the hearer in order to attain his/her intention. For example, in the context of a specific promise between the speaker and the hearer, before describing it, we should distinguish logically a promise from a threat or coercion in communication:

A promise is a pledge to do something *for you, not to you*; but a threat is a pledge to do something *to you, not for you*. A promise is defective if the thing promised is something the promisee does not want done... Furthermore, a promise, unlike an invitation, normally requires some sort of occasion or situation that calls for the promise. A crucial feature of such occasions or situations seems to be that the promise wishes that something be done, and the promisor is aware of this wish (Searle 1969:58, *my emphasis*).

This form of promising requires an attitude of commitment on the part of the speaker which indicates that, "it is the undertaking of an obligation to perform a certain act" (Searle 1969:60).

### 3.2.3 An application of Austin's primary contribution for Christian Ethics

Many Christian ethicists would agree that Christian ethics is based on biblical intent in the Bible, which is the Word of God and gives the commands and promises of God to the believing community. It is applied for the sake of the kingdom of God and in order to attain God's righteousness in the present world. It demonstrates God's performative action as the dedicated attitude of the agent of *God's people* to achieve God's promise to them by working within them and applying God's divine purpose faithfully. That is to say, God (speaker or revealer) is a *doer as agent* with illocutionary force in what God is saying for the Christian ethical life, not just a commander or an intimidator—which is a point that previous Christian ethicists overlooked.

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subjects within that system (*parole*)" (Clark 1990:91). Vanhoozer (1998:209) argues that, "Whereas locution has to do with a sign system or *langue*, illocutions and perlocutions have to do with sentences, with language in action or *parole*. The notion of the illocutionary act enables Austin to distinguish between the content of what we say (e.g., the sense and reference of our sentence) and its force (i.e., what we are using the content of our sentence to do)."

For them, Christian ethics is directed towards human behaviour, human beings or moral disciplines rather than to God as the doer as agent in the Christian life and the confessing community. Therefore, in Christian ethics, God is *a doer (agent)* who participates actively *in believers* in order to fulfil the kingdom of God and God's promises for the people of God and not simply *as a helper* that does something *to the believers* according to Word of God. Thus, we should consider God's performative action (illocutionary force) as the agent in Christian ethics by observing illocutionary acts in Scripture to refine contemporary Biblical ethical theory.<sup>95</sup>

The crucial point to note here is that the perlocutionary act has an effect on the hearer which is achieved by an illocutionary act. Nonetheless, linguistic philosophers for too long have neglected the performative dimension of language and its illocutionary action and force (Austin 1975:1-5). It means that previous studies largely focus on the propositional element (locution level) or its effect (perlocution level) but not on the illocution which does not describe anything even though an illocution is the performance of an act (Austin 1975:1-5). For Austin, successful communication occurs only when there is a response to the illocutionary force within a proper action at the perlocution level which demonstrates that complete understanding of an utterance should contain all three dimensions, that is, the locution, illocution and perlocution between a speaker/text and a hearer/reader. Therefore, performative language shows how meaning is ultimately produced in the text, how one acts by speaking, and what effect it is expected to have in everyday life.

From this perspective, we can distinguish between *the meaning of what we say* (the sense and reference of a sentence) and *its force* (what one is using the content of a sentence to do) as an illocutionary force within the perlocutionary act (Austin 1975:108). The distinction can produce a particular ethical sensitivity to the message of the kingdom proclaimed by Jesus. For example, when Jesus said, "Listen!" and "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" (Mt 13:18; Mk

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<sup>95</sup> Alston (1964:39) emphasises the importance of Austin's notion of illocution in terms of meaning: "If this is the line along which meaning should be analyzed, then the concept of an illocutionary act is the most fundamental concept in semantics and, hence, in the philosophy of language."

4:9; Lk 8:8), Jesus did not just say, “listen” or “listen” in the plain sense of the word. Rather, as Gerhardsson (1968:165-193) argues, the command, “Listen!” (*akouete*) echoes the *Shema* “Hear, O Israel” in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. This implies that the command to hear, and therefore to obey, which in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 requires hearers to love God with their heart and soul and strength, calls for a wholehearted response to Jesus (Hooker 2000:89). The utterance does not simply mean that the hearers should hear him but it aims to warn false believers or those who do not rightly follow God’s will with a sincere heart or have a correct understanding of the Word of God with the intention of doing it (Bruner 1990:495; Perry 1997:47; Snodgrass 2008: 152; 2013:286).

Thus, the locutionary act does not simply mean, “Listen!”, but it also entails the illocutionary action as the meaning of warnings which is required to do something to the hearer. Furthermore, if the hearer appreciates the illocutionary act as a message of warning and is then persuaded, frightened, or alarmed, it means that a perlocution act has been performed. In this regard, the performative language meaning and effect go far beyond simply the meaning of “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!” as a locutionary act with propositional meaning and recognition. Even though Jesus is no longer here on the earth, his statements as a locutionary action was/is performed as an illocutionary action of a message of warning to both the audience in a past event in the biblical world, and today’s hearer in our contemporary world. It shows that the utterance of Jesus is a past event but its illocutionary force or energy and its intention are continuously being echoed as a reality in the present world, and it is up to the reader (hearer) to respond to the words of Jesus. Thus, the illocutionary action and force, as a language-dynamic, can bridge the gap between the biblical world and today’s world. It can be employed to aid exegesis based on biblical contents or theological principles to predictable variations on the knowledge of the context of the ethics of the kingdom of God for the contemporary Christian life.

In addition, even though the reader of the text already knows on a locutionary level what the meaning of “Listen” is, it has no influence any longer on the hearer because the locutionary act merely refers to propositional meanings. It has no power to do something to the hearer or cause

a particular effect (cf. Searle 1969:31). If the language has an effect on the hearer, the hearer should respond not only on the locutionary level, but also on the illocutionary level. The living Triune God is still speaking to us through Scripture, not just in past stories but also in the present in order to achieve God's kingdom and God's promises for God's people. This indicates that the key point in Jesus' preaching about the kingdom of God is what we should do as Christians (Stassen & Gushee 2003:11-16; Burridge 2007:40-50). Therefore, the illocutionary act helps us to rethink the meaning of the ethics of the kingdom and an appropriate response to it as it offers hermeneutical insight into Christian Biblical ethics.

### **3.3 JR Searle's SAT – from the Physics (Content/Sign) to the Semantics (Communication)**

For Searle, the issue of meaning has to do with how we get from the physics (content or sign) to the semantics (communication) in real-life situations, that is, understanding that physical sounds and objects produce a meaningful message as a medium of communication between the speaker/text/author and the hearer/reader/audience in ordinary life. For example, using a song and a ring for a marriage proposal. How can we explain the idea that a simple song and ring would cause a person to decide to live the rest of her or his life as someone's spouse? The key to such a response is related to seeing the commitment (social context) in that situation as the construction of social reality and the way that the actions contain communicative practice in a certain context according to that way of life in that context. Hence, it is related to an accepted convention. This indicates that we can derive meaning only with the assumption that the sound being uttered or produced is created by one who is doing something using language in order to communicate to another.

Meaning is obtained not just through words and the utterance of sounds (content or sign) but rather by doing something as an "act" (communication) in a community with "a rule-governed form of behaviour". In the case of the biblical text, it implies what the text meant and what the text would do to the hearer at the same time. For example, while setting the table for a regular family dinner, a mother may say to her child, "Do you see anything that is made of stainless

steel and weighs 10 grams on the table?” Perhaps, in Western culture, the child would go and bring forks and knives to set the table, but in Asian culture, the child would go and bring metal chopsticks and spoons. The example shows that meaning (communication) cannot be perceived only through physical description. Rather, it is communicated in accordance with social rules or social circumstances of a certain community. It also means that even though the propositional content may be the same as in the meaning of table utensils in the same real life situations, the social context determines whether different meanings such as forks and knives or chopsticks and spoons (which refer to different things) would be obtained in different cultural settings. Therefore, speaking a language is a communicative action which follows the social rules in a particular community. Accordingly, a theory of language use should be part of a theory of action because, “the study of the meaning of sentences and the study of speech acts are not two independent studies but one study from two different points of view” (Searle 1969:18).

### 3.3.1 Searle’s primary contribution to SAT – Rules, Propositions and Meanings

Vanhoozer (1998:209) remarks that, “If Austin is the Luther of SAT, John Searle may be considered its Melancthon, its systematic theologian.” Although many scholars have studied Austin’s work, Searle has provided by far the most comprehensive account of speech act theory.<sup>96</sup> Searle develops and modifies in a persuasive way aspects of Austin’s work on the performance of an act which is referred to as “speech act theory” (SAT) in his book, “*Speech Act: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*” (1969). Searle (1971:39) affirms that, “The illocutionary act is the minimal unit of linguistic communication.”

However, Searle points out a problem with Austin’s distinction between the utterance itself

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<sup>96</sup> Searle’s contributions to the subject matter are highlighted in *Speech Act: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); *The Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); *Expression and Meaning: Studies in Theory of Speech Act* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Penguin, 1995); and in conjunction with Daniel Vanderveken, *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

(propositional content) and the illocutionary force, that is, how to separate the illocution from the locution in a communication context. Searle (1968:148) strongly argues that the locutionary and the illocutionary acts cannot be separated from each other because no utterance of a sentence and its meaning are completely “force-neutral.” Specifically, a propositional act cannot take place alone, as it is always performed with an illocutionary act at the same time. This means that every locutionary act has an illocutionary act due to its inherent linguistic nature. Searle (1969:29) shows that, “One cannot just express a proposition while doing nothing else and have thereby performed a complete speech act... When a proposition is expressed it is always expressed in the performance of an illocutionary act.”

Thus, Searle (1968:155) does not use the term locutionary act, rather, he maintains that,

We need to distinguish the illocutionary act from the propositional act – that is, the act of expressing the proposition (a phrase which is neutral as to illocutionary force) ... The production of the sentence token under certain conditions is the illocutionary act, and the illocutionary act is the minimal unit of linguistic communication” (Searle 1971:39).

Searle follows Austin’s perspective of the performance of an act as language use, not in its “constative” elements but as the performance of an act.<sup>97</sup> According to Searle (1971:40), this performance of an act as an illocutionary act is the minimal unit of linguistic communication. It can be divided into three other preliminary notions, namely rules, propositions, and meanings.

First, the concept of rules in language use indicates that knowing the meaning of the word is simply a matter of knowing the rules for its use (Searle 1971:40). In Searle’s words, “If meaning is a matter of rules of use, surely we ought to be able to state the rules for the use of expressions in a way which would explicate the meaning of those expressions” (Searle 1971:41). In other words, “Speaking a language is engaging in a (highly complex) rule-governed form of behaviour. To learn and master a language is (*inter alia*) to learn and to have mastered these rules” (Searle 1969:12). In this regard, Searle distinguishes between two types of rules –

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<sup>97</sup> This modification is at the core of Searle’s speech act theory as the performative aspect of language. The framework comprises of: (1) utterance acts which means to utter words (morphemes, sentences); (2) propositional acts, which refer and predicate; (3) illocutionary acts based on statements, questions, commands, promises, and so on; (4) perlocutionary acts which seek to persuade, convince, and so on (Searle 1969:24-25).

regulative rules and constitutive rules. The regulative rules regulate independently existing forms of behaviour which characteristically have the form or can be comfortably paraphrased into “Do X” or “If Y do X” (Searle 1969:33). On the other hand, constitutive rules do not merely regulate, they create or define new forms of behaviour which often have the form “X counts as Y”, or “X counts as Y in context C” (Searle 1969:33-35). This relates to *how we can find and explain semantics in contemporary life*.<sup>98</sup> For example, a social rule is implied in the statement, “One ought not to utter obscenities at formal gatherings”, but that hardly seems to be a rule of the sort that is crucial in explicating the semantics of a language (Searle 1971:42). Therefore, the semantics of language in everyday life can be counted as a series of constitutive rules in terms of meaning and illocutionary acts which are performed following these sets of constitutive rules in a certain circumstance (Searle 1971:42). Accordingly, constitutive rules are part of speech acts.

Second, in the utterance of the sentence the speaker expresses a proposition. Searle explains the relationship between the propositional acts and the illocutionary acts in order to distinguish between an assertion and the statement of it as follows:

A proposition is what is asserted in the act of asserting, what is stated in the act of stating... The expression of a proposition is a propositional act, not an illocutionary act... when a proposition is expressed it is always expressed in the performance of an illocutionary act (Searle 1969:29).

Propositional acts show that illocutionary acts are performed simultaneously which means illocutionary acts have propositional content within propositional elements which are not separate from each other. The propositional act implies that the speaker has taken up a certain stance or state of affairs towards it which means the speaker is committed to its content in order to attain the speaker’s purpose as a reality for the hearer. In this way, Searle regards what one does with words (propositional content) as an illocutionary act in ordinary life. He points out that “the illocutionary force indicator shows how the proposition is to be taken” (Searle 1969:30).

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<sup>98</sup> I will offer more details on this issue of constitutive rules later in this study.

This view of the illocutionary act in the speech act has been captured as  $F(p)$  or  $F(RP)$  (Searle 1969:31-32). In “ $F(p)$ ,”  $F$  represents the illocutionary force while  $p$  is the proposition, and  $RP$  is the term of reference and predication which indicates the non-illocutionary parts of the statement:

The illocutionary force indicator shows how the proposition is to be taken, or to put it another way, what illocutionary force the utterance is to have; that is, what illocutionary act the speaker is performing in the utterance of the sentence... word order, stress, intonation contour, punctuation, the mood of the verb, and the so-called performative verb (Searle 1969:30).

More precisely, “the general form of (very many kinds of) illocutionary acts is  $F(p)$  where the variable “ $F$ ” takes the illocutionary force indicating devices as values and “ $p$ ” takes expressions of propositions” (Searle 1969:31). In other words,  $F$  implies both the proposition and illocutionary acts (such as a warning  $W(p)$ , a promise  $Pr(p)$ , a blessing;  $B(p)$ , and so on) which produce meaning or meaningful action in accordance with the utterance of a sentence. For example, we can apply “ $F(p)$ ” to 1 Corinthians 1:23, that is, “We preach ( $F$ ) Christ crucified ( $p$ ).” This can be represented as “Jesus is Lord” (1 Cor 12:3) which from the perspective of Pauline Christology is neither simply “ $p$ ” nor simply “ $F$ ” but “ $F(p)$ ”. This approach demonstrates that the expression of a proposition becomes a certain action by illocutionary force and anticipates meaningful deeds in a hearer with relation to the statement of the speaker (see Thiselton 2006a:86).

Specifically, in the context of a promise between a speaker and a hearer, the proposition must embody a future action that is predicated on the speaker. This means that a promise implies that something is not yet fulfilled but there is a possibility that it would happen and would create a new reality through the speaker’s statement and not through past stories. It also must contain the veracity of the speaker’s statement on the hearer which entails the speaker’s self-devotion and responsibility under an obligation to do  $A$  when it comes to fulfilling a promise in the present and the speaker’s ability to do something. For example, in John 14:27, Jesus declares, “Peace I leave with you” which is not simply description or statement “ $p$ ”, but rather it refers to the making of a promise “ $F(p)$ ” as  $Pr(p)$ , which points to the speaker’s authority and state of affairs to do it for the hearer. It shows that the speaker intends his/her hearer to



appreciate the statement as a promise in accordance with the propositional content “*p*”. Therefore, a proposition “*p*” becomes a possible meaning in a communicative situation that elicits proper action to the statement through the illocutionary force “*F(p)*”.

As Patte (1988:91) also points out, the notion of illocutionary act pays attention to “the production of meaning by the author”. The author/speaker is an agent of meaning as well as a communication agent. According to one of SAT theorists, Grice (1957a:385), meaning depends on the speaker’s intention which produces an effect on the hearer: “To say that a speaker *S* meant something by *X* is to say that *S* intended the statement (utterance) of *X* to produce some effect in a hearer *H* by means of the recognition of this intention.” This view shows the relationship between the concept of meaning and the concept of intention as a communicative action between the speaker and the hearer by getting him/her to appreciate the speaker’s purpose. Whereas Grice’s definition focuses on the real meaning and the effect on the hearer of a communicative situation, Searle faults the formulation for two reasons.

First, since meaning always takes place within a particular convention, without understanding the conventional aspect, meaning could not be understood.<sup>99</sup> Searle argues that, “Meaning is more than a matter of intention, it is also at least sometimes a matter of convention”<sup>100</sup> (Searle 1971:46). Second, Searle claims that Grice has confused the illocutionary with the perlocutionary acts. In Grice’s argument, when it comes to effect, saying something as well as meaning it is a matter of intending to perform a perlocutionary act. However, Searle (1969:46) opposes this assertion and insists that, “Saying something and meaning it is a matter of intending to perform an illocutionary act.” For example, some ginseng scholars say “Korean ginseng has higher medicinal efficacy than any other ginseng in the world”. Regardless of how people believe or respond to it, this statement only has an effect on the people who accept or respond to ginseng’s efficacy by taking ginseng based on the speaker’s purpose (saying).

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<sup>99</sup> The language of conventional aspects has already been addressed and will no longer be stressed at this point.

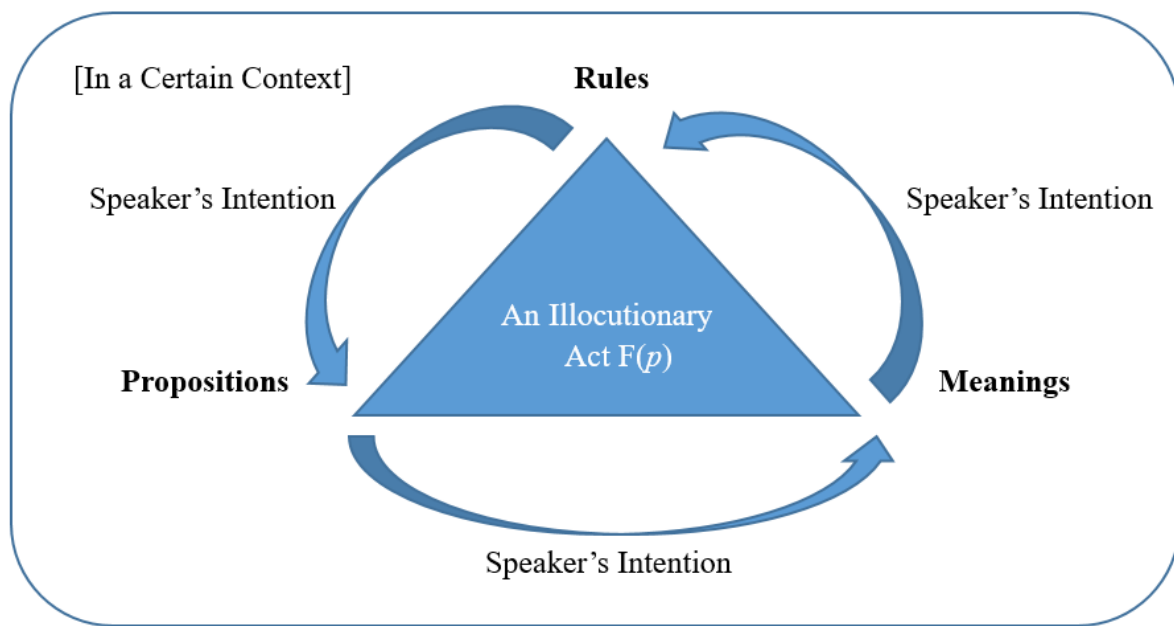
<sup>100</sup> This is not to say that the meaning inferred from the utterance is not what the speaker intended.

If meaning is a matter of intention to perform a perlocutionary act, how then can we explain the claim that Korean ginseng has higher medicinal efficacy, despite the fact that some people do not accept that ginseng has medicinal efficacy? It means that the saying has a meaning by itself through an inherent language force that is not dependent on the hearer's response or belief. In the statement, "Korean ginseng has higher medicinal efficacy than any other ginseng in the world", this fact is created by the illocutionary action which the speaker performed according to his/her real intention and the hearer recognizes the speaker's purpose to produce effect through the illocutionary act. This illustration shows the importance of the degree of difference between an illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act in terms of meaning and its effect on the hearer in communicative practice. Thus, through illocutionary acts, the speaker succeeds in doing what he/she is trying to do by getting the hearer to recognize what the statement or text is trying to do (Searle 1969:47).

Accordingly, the "effect" on the hearer is not a belief or response; it consists simply in the hearer's understanding of the illocutionary act of the speaker, and this effect is called an illocutionary effect (*IE*) by Searle (1969:47). Searle (1969:47) suggests an alternative to Grice's definition in the light of SAT, that is, "The Speaker *S* intends to produce an illocutionary effect *IE* in the hearer *H* by means of getting *H* to recognize *S*'s intention to produce *IE*". In this sense, therefore, the meaning is found in the intention in the illocutionary act by the speaker to the hearer, not in the perlocutionary act (Searle 1969:47).<sup>101</sup> Searle's definition of an illocutionary act as the minimal unit of linguistic communication in terms of meaning and intention in SAT can be described by the rules, propositions, and meanings, as the diagram below shows:

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<sup>101</sup> Searle (1971:45) says, "I will reject the idea that the intentions that matter for meaning are the intentions to produce effects on audiences".



Diagram\_3: An illocutionary act  $F(p)$

### 3.3.2 An application of Searle's primary contribution for Christian Ethics

Searle's perspective leads us to how words relate to things and how words influence the world, that is, referring to the essential identity between the word and what it means in the present life. For example, in Hebrew, the noun "*dabar*" means both "word" and "thing" (Barr 1961:129-140), and it actually makes a distinction between thought and action. It pertains to what lies behind the utterance of a sentence, namely the word of power emanating as a reality from the unique position of the speaker in a particular community. In other words, the untapped or unseen world of reality is definitely a matter of the illocutionary action which is produced by the speaker/authors' intention, not by the hearer/reader's response.

Thus, biblical ethical theory should consider illocutionary acts in Scripture in order to apply and redefine biblical norms of life based on the Word of God to our contemporary world. For example, the interpreter of the statement, "Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Mt 25:13), should regard the illocutionary act as neither simply  $p$  nor simply  $F$

but  $F(p)$ . This biblical passage indicates that the believers must “be prepared” – be in readiness and watchfulness for *the coming kingdom* as Christians who do what they ought to do in the present world in accordance with the words of Jesus. Furthermore, the statement also refers to Jesus’s divine messianic force and messianic reality which contain the meaning of what Jesus said (locutionary act), the force of what Jesus said (illocutionary act), and the response of saying something (perlocutionary act) and point to the identity of Jesus as the bridegroom of his people (cf. France 2000:181). This perspective would help us to recognize the divine illocutionary force in the utterance of Jesus according to the His messianic purpose which shows Jesus’ specific state of affairs.

Jesus’ sayings have illocutionary force as messianic language to accomplish the purpose of salvation in the believers (hearers). Even though the utterance of Jesus is a past event, its illocutionary force or energy and its intention are continuously being echoed in our lives as dynamic and powerful communicative action between Jesus and the believers. The implication is that the believer should live the everyday life based on the Word of God and in faith by the illocutionary action which Jesus performed. Thus, the words of Jesus as illocutionary acts have implications for the kingdom of God through moral human action.

### **3.3.3 The social reality of institutional facts and constitutive rules**

As we have seen earlier, meaning cannot be perceived by physical science as a brute fact alone. This shows that the study of the hermeneutical task from the perspective of SAT is to consider, in relation to a community, not only that which is in the text but the world behind the text in order to clarify and find meaning in the text. However, it is also one of the aspects of the production of meaning by the text. To put it differently, meaning is governed by an institutional fact in a certain community, that is, what the people appreciate as collective intentionality in accordance with social rules. This consideration leads to one of the essential arguments of Searle’s work based on the assertion that, “Speaking a language is performing acts according to rules” (Searle 1969:47). Searle (1969:37) notes that:

The form this hypothesis will take is that the semantic structure of a language may be regarded as a conventional realization of a series of sets of underlying constitutive rules, and that speech acts are acts characteristically performed by uttering expression in accordance with these sets of constitutive rules.

On this issue, Searle proposes a distinction between brute and institutional facts to determine the meaning in the text. In order to explain the distinction, Searle draws on Anscombe's (1958:69-72) notion of brute fact which refers to the approach of natural science and facts about physical reality. For example, he shows that it is a brute fact that the sun is ninety-three million miles from the earth and an institutional fact that at the time of his writing, Bill Clinton was the president of the United States of America<sup>102</sup> (Searle 1995:27):

Brute facts exist independently of any human institutions; institutional facts can exist only within human institutions. Brute facts require the institution of language in order that we can state the facts, but the brute facts themselves exist quite independently of language or any other institution... institutional facts on the other hand, require special human institutions for their very existence. Language is one such institution (Searle 1995:27).

Thus, meaning is not a brute fact such as the fact that the sun is ninety-three million miles from the earth but the distinction between brute facts and institutional facts helps us to uncover how we get from the physics (content, sign) to the semantics (communication). Vanhoozer (1998:244) also emphasises the importance of the notion of institutional fact in clarifying meaning thus:

Consider the human institution of baseball. It is an institutional fact that when Hank Aaron sent the ball over the fence in center field, he hit a home run. Newspapers report such institutional facts: "Hans Aaron hit a home in the ninth inning to win the game." The physical sciences cannot account for this fact. The physicist can calculate the force and trajectory of the ball as it comes off the bat, but such a person looks in vain with his or her instruments for a home run. There is no set of statements about physical happenings or states of affairs to which statements of institutional facts can be reduced. Institutional facts exist, so to speak, on top of brute facts.

Accordingly, meaning cannot be perceived by the physical sciences or the state of affairs alone.

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<sup>102</sup> When Searle wrote his book, Bill Clinton was still the President of the United States of America.

Rather, it can be recognised in institutional facts which are supported by a system of what Searle calls “constitutive rules.” Institutional facts govern human behaviour to produce a certain form, “X counts as Y in context C” (Searle 1969:35). This clearly shows that the propositional expression contains specific constitutive rules, that is, the collective intent within a particular society. For example, under the constitutive rules of soccer, when the soccer player kicks a soccer ball into the goal, it counts as one goal. There are conventions involved in these constitutive rules which relate to all kinds of non-linguistic criteria. Therefore, to perform an illocutionary act is to engage in “a rule-governed form of behaviour” (Searle 1979:17).

Searle (1969:51) points out that institutional facts “are indeed facts; but their existence, unlike the existence of ‘brute facts’, presupposes the existence of certain human institutions” (e.g. marriage or the rules of baseball). Thus, “the fact that a man performed a certain speech act, e.g., made a promise, is an institutional fact” (Searle 1969:52). For example, the first Beatitude can be expressed following Searle’s formulation, “X counts as Y in context C” as “*the poor in spirit counts as having the kingdom of heaven in the context of the promises of God’s blessing.*” It indicates that the kingdom of God should be regarded as God’s Word in a verbal human communication that would establish a covenant between God and God’s people for the establishment of God’s kingdom. Consequently, to say “I bless you (promise)” is to perform a speech-act of implied behaviour or commitment that would be determined by speech in a particular community. This propositional condition of a promise entails an institutional fact in the believing community that would be realised when the speaker declared it, even though it just has the possibility for an untapped world of reality to the coming kingdom, that is, the consummation and realisation of the kingdom of God in the fullness of time.

Hence, in a promise, an act must be predicated on the speaker as a future act (Searle 1969:57), and the statement of the speaker is regarded as a commitment to do the future act. In other words, the statement, “I bless you” or “I promise you” is one of the strongest illocutionary forces indicating devices for commitment, and the essential feature of a promise is that it undertakes an obligation to perform a certain act (Searle 1969:58, 60). Therefore, institutional facts in the Christian community refer to God’s performative action in the force of what God

said, which brings about some response in accordance with God's intent towards the believers, and it can produce perlocutionary effects on the believing community in the form of moral human behaviour.

Consequently, the ethical conception of the kingdom of God is itself "a rule-governed form of behaviour", for it contains certain constitutive rules such as the value system of righteousness in Christian communities. The cultural conventions involved in these constitutive rules are related to all kinds of institutional facts. The non-linguistic elements help us to recognise where the illocutionary act operates, and to see that the illocutionary act produces new realities. For example, the statement, "I divorce you", is an institutional fact that creates a social reality in appropriate circumstances such as the court (Searle 1995:54-55). In "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3), the statement is an institutional fact of collective intentionality in the confessing community that produces new reality of the kingdom by God's illocutionary act which implies God's purpose to the people of God. In this sense, "speaking a language and writing a text are matters of institutional facts and constitutional rules, matters of authors' intentions and corporate intentions" (Vanhoozer 1998:245). Therefore, we should remember that biblical texts in general relate to institutions with their own sets of constitutive rules. From this perspective, one possible meaning may be that the Christian should be more concerned about textual meaning as an institutional fact in order to find possible meaning in the text and the grace to do it according to collective intentionality of the faith community from God's intention in the illocutionary act to all believers.

### 3.3.4 Direction of Fit – Intention and Action

The intention of the text/speaker itself has meaning which can be defined in terms of directedness,<sup>103</sup> and is directly linked to a certain action in a particular community. Stated

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<sup>103</sup> The definition of intention was used to demonstrate the directness of consciousness by Franz Brentano in his 1874 work, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. Husserl's theory of intentionality was influenced by Brentano, and through Husserl, Hirsch came up with his *Validity in Interpretation*. However, Hirsch primarily focuses on the importance of consciousness rather than action. According to Hirsch (1967:218), intention is the "Relation between an act of awareness and its object".

differently, to intend something means that it has a kind of direction in one's mind, or it exhibits a behaviour towards a specific concept or object relating a specific action. If the intention of the text/speaker as having a directional nature has an effect on the relationship between the reader/hearer and the world, it must take place only within a communicative act. In the sense of Gilbert Ryle's notion of "thick description",<sup>104</sup> this means some actions or situations are described sufficiently and do not lose their intentionality. A matter of intention then is "what he is doing, being in terms of what he is doing it for" (Ryle 1971:474-475) which entails that a description is adequately thick when it allows us to recognize the genuine intention or meaning the author produces in a text. For example, "the same bodily movement – a rapid closing and opening of the eyelid – can be either an act or a non-act. What makes a wink a communicative act depends entirely on whether it was intended as such" (Vanhoozer 1998:248).

Therefore, the intention in the text/utterance of a statement only enables us to view actions as more than mere nonverbal expressions or written documents. Searle (1976:4) notes the importance of the author's intention which is being able to find the true meaning that *the original author intended in the text*, and he calls this the *illocutionary point*. The speaker's intention creates illocutionary force which points or aims at getting the hearer to do something. In other words, the purpose of the speaker produces an illocutionary point which indicates that some illocutions have a certain intention and that the illocutionary act has a clearly associated perlocutionary intent (Searle 1979:3). The speaker's illocutionary force determines the kind of direction between the propositional element and the world, and it can explain how that content relates to the word as a real and not an abstract idea. Searle (1979:5) calls this aspect the "direction of fit" between the propositional content and the world and it is always a consequence of the illocutionary point, that is, *how the propositional content matches the world with the illocutionary points*. The speaker intends  $F(p)$  to be both a propositional content (subject matter) and the illocutionary force (energy) to the hearer in the relationship between the word and the world (cf. Searle 1969:47). Therefore, the speaker's purpose pertains to the "direction" (illocutionary point) of the communicative action which creates a new reality in the world by urging the hearer to perform a certain action in accordance with the statement of the

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<sup>104</sup> The term "thick description" is borrowed from the anthropologist Clifford Geertz. It sees social reality as a culture or network in which various institutions, acts, traditions, customs, are connected (Geertz 1973:3-32).



speaker.

In particular, this illocutionary point depends on the illocutionary force in the statement of the speaker which causes a difference in the direction of fit in language use even though we have the same propositional content. For example, the statements “I suggest we should study” and “I insist that we should study” have the same the propositional content and illocutionary point as “we should study”, but with varying degrees of strength because each has a different illocutionary force as shown in the difference between the words “suggest” and “insist”. The illocutionary force is closely linked to the kind of language that is used in ordinary life with a certain intentionality towards the hearer/reader. Thus, Searle (1976:10-16; 1979:10-20) identifies five basic types of speech acts  $F(p)$  which people perform with language and which are arranged around the organising categories of the direction of fit between world and word.<sup>105</sup> These are:

- (1) Assertives (representatives, e.g. assertions, conjectures, and predictions) are utterances that say how things are which are true or false utterances and have the words-to-world direction of fit;
- (2) Directives (e.g. ask, order, command, request, and promise) are utterances trying to get people to do things, that is, utterances which urge the hearer to do something and have the world-to-words direction of fit;
- (3) Commissives (similar to directives) are utterances which commit us to do things, that is, utterances which commit one to do something but also have the world-to-words direction of fit;

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<sup>105</sup> Actually, Searle borrows Austin’s notion of illocutionary verbs, I have therefore added and harmonised this with Austin’s view. For more information on this issue, see J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975:8-12).

- (4) Expressives (e.g. thanks, complaints, and apologies) are utterances expressing our feelings and attitudes; they express one's psychological state and have no direction of fit because in performing an expressive, the speaker is neither trying to get the world to match the words nor the words to match the world;<sup>106</sup>
- (5) Declarations (e.g. appointments, definitions, and condemnations) are utterances which bring about change, that is, utterances which lead to the correspondence between the propositional content and reality.

A declaration has the double direction of fit (word to world and world to word):

If we adopt illocutionary point as the basic notion on which to classify uses of language, then there are a rather limited number of basic things we do with language: we tell people how things are, we try to get them to do things, we commit ourselves to doing things, we express our feelings and attitudes and we bring about changes through our utterances. Often, we do more than one of these at once in the same utterance (Searle 1979:29).

Therefore, the illocutionary act should distinguish between different illocutionary points in language use. It means that the categorization of the illocutionary act is made on the distinction between different illocutionary points. The direction of fit like the illocutionary force is closely related to the speaker's intention which determines the direction between words and the world. This shows that the speaker's intention  $F(p)$  expressed in the same proposition ( $p$ ) results in different illocutionary acts  $F$  such as a warning  $W(p)$ , promise  $Pr(p)$ , blessing  $B(p)$ , and so on (Searle 1969:31). In order to explain this, Searle (1979:3-4) employs Anscombe's illustration<sup>107</sup> of the shopping list of a shopper and detective:

Suppose a man goes to the supermarket with a shopping list given him by his wife on which are written the words "beans, butter, bacon and bread". Suppose as he goes around with his shopping cart selecting these items, he is followed by a detective who writes down everything he takes... in the case of the shopper's list... to get the world to match the words; the man is supposed to make his actions fit the list. In the case of the detective... to make the words match the world; the man is supposed to make the list fit the actions of the shopper. This can be

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<sup>106</sup> See the illustration by J R Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979:15) which says, "For example, when I apologize for having stepped on your toe, it is not my purpose either to claim that your toe was stepped on nor to get it stepped on... one cannot say: I apologize that I stepped on your toe; rather the correct English is, I apologize for stepping on your toe."

<sup>107</sup> For further explanation of this illustration, see Anscombe (1957).

further demonstrated by observing the role of “mistake” in the two cases. If the detective gets home and suddenly realizes that the man bought pork chops instead of bacon, he can simply erase the word “bacon” and write “pork chops”. But if the shopper gets home and his wife points out he has bought pork chops when he should have bought bacon he cannot correct the mistake by erasing “bacon” from the list and writing “pork chops.”

The illustration above shows different illocutionary acts in the direction of fit between words and world. The detective’s list has the word-to-world direction of fit (as do statements, descriptions, assertions, and explanations). On the other hand, the shopper’s list has the world-to-word direction of fit (as do requests, commands, vows, and promises) (Searle 1979:4). Even though both lists have the same propositional content (*p*), their force (*F*) is quite different, and the distinction between the directions of fit is definitely the distinction between the different kinds of illocutionary act based on the author’s purpose. For example, when Paul writes that “No one can say “Jesus is Lord” expect by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3), the propositional content “Jesus is Lord” purposes an assertion point which has a word to match the world direction of fit. On the other hand, “Jesus is Lord” is the same as that of the proposition, “If you confess with your lips that “Jesus is Lord” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom 10:9). However, its purpose is a promise point which has a world that matches the word’s direction of the fit. This illustration clearly shows that the distinction between different directions of fit is precisely the distinction between different types of illocutionary points even though they have same propositional content.

The point in this discussion is that the relationship between the illocutionary act and its direction of fit can be used to develop a Christian ethics as another way to act in the world and to engage the exegetical task in order to clarify and deepen the meaning of a text in the context of its ethical content. The direction of fit then extends to practical moral theory, ethical reasoning, and even applied ethics. More precisely, the differences in the intentionality in the direction of fit between words and the world can be used as a hermeneutical tool. It bridges the gap between what is meant in the biblical text as could be explicated by a careful exegetical study, and what it means as the goal of today’s biblical ethicists understanding. This becomes possible when Christian ethics has accurately appreciated the propositional content of Scripture, and its illocutionary force to apply it, based on forms biblical moral content in the Scriptures.

Thus, we see how the biblical words as past events fit with the world today as living messages that apply to the Christian life. That is to say, this view offers the connection between the biblical world of event and the direction of Christian ethics. Since Christian ethics is based on Scripture, interpreting the Bible is crucial to biblical ethics which offers guidelines about how to live and what to do as Christians (Birch & Rasmussen 1976:11-14; Vanhoozer, Bartholomew, Treier & Wright 2005:199-200). For Searle, meaning has to do specifically with the illocutionary act, not the perlocutionary effects or the propositional content. This implies that the biblical authors spoke about something in order to get their readers to recognise their intention to produce something in the readers which demonstrates the authors' directionality, that is, the authors' attempt to create a world-to-words direction of fit.

Christian ethics should be concerned with what the text wants to do in the mind (and even the life) of the reader by his/her direction of fit. If Christian ethics ignores this, it would simply be a unidimensional thing from a given passage of propositional content – not a specific meaning in the text but a mere interpretation of the propositional components. It would provide a moralistic or theological norm but it cannot show that the intended message in the text has illocutionary force without distorting the objective of the author. Christian ethics should pay precise attention to the text's direction of fit in order to clarify the meaning of a text and then act and apply it according to God's communicative intent from the text. Thus, it is important to ensure that Christian ethical theories represent  $F(p)$  – the illocutionary force  $F$  of its propositional elements ( $p$ ) in line with the Christian way of life based on Scripture's intention.

In order to respond to the biblical direction of fit in Christian ethics, Christians should appreciate and accept the biblical purpose as  $F(p)$  per se following God's intention. In fact, the aim of Christian ethics is not simply to obtain information on how to live or the norms of behaviour. Rather, it is to reconstruct the Christian values and intentions in everyday life by doing what we ought to do in accordance with God's will, such as making a promise, issuing a warning or giving an exhortation for the sake of God's kingdom, thereby attaining God's purpose for the people of God and for the world. In this sense, a social ethical approach to the

direction of fit reminds us of the relationship between what the Bible said/meant (*p*) and the world which is the author's illocutionary force that determines the kind of direction. This dimension is not merely aimed at reconstructing the meanings of a propositional morality theme in relation to Christian ethics in Scripture, but rather at doing what the biblical author intended in the public domain ethically i.e., in terms of the presence of God's kingdom and its witness. Consequently, the relationship between the ethical approach to the text and its praxis from the author's illocutionary force is a matter of following the directions between words and the world. The focus provides the essential connection between the biblical world and the direction of the Christian moral dimension which enables one to obey the Bible's teaching as the original biblical authors intended in contemporary life – not as past stories of Scripture, but as a lived reality.

### **3.4 DD Evans's Logic of Self-Involving Activity – Biblical Interpretation in SAT**

The appropriation of SAT to particular religious and biblical language (texts) as an interdisciplinary measure between philosophy and theology constituted the work of Austin's student, Donald Evans. Evans was a professor of philosophy in Toronto and studied under Austin in Oxford, but completed his degree after Austin's death under I T Ramsey; he was also influenced indirectly by J O Urmson. It was a good opportunity for Evans to be able to conduct research both in linguistic philosophy at the onset of SAT as a discipline and in theology as religious and biblical language in order to apply these concepts to biblical interpretation.<sup>108</sup> Evans expressed his view in "*The Logic of Self-Involvement*", an undervalued book which was published in 1963, only a year after Austin's work, "*How to do Things with Words*".

Evans's book began with the question, "in what ways is language self-involving?" The question

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<sup>108</sup> Briggs (2001a:147) argues that Evans's logic of self-involvement is useful in the task of interpreting certain types of New Testament text. Evans (1963:17) had stated that "my main point, in any case, is that the basic 'ordinary' language to which an analytic philosopher should appeal when he considers *Christian* conceptions is biblical language" (*his emphasis*).

pertains to the task of exploring the logical connections between statements (texts) and the “practical commitments, attitudes, and feelings” in ordinary language, especially in religious language (Evans 1963:11). It is assumed that language often involves action or decree and a certain circumstance which is called performative language in SAT. This perspective permeated Evans’ notion of, “the self-involving activity” in religious discourse, based on Austin’s theory of “illocutionary force language” especially in biblical language which relates to God’s creation (kingdom of God). According to Evans, all language is performative in the sense that the speaker/user does more than assent to a fact, that is, uses language in which things are done by saying something. Stated differently, biblical language does not merely refer to propositional knowledge or content, but primarily to a self-involving activity.

Thus, Evans proposes a new logic of performative biblical language relating to God’s act of creation which shows that the Word of God is the creative act in a communicative action. It is based on the assumption that there is a common denominator in language use between the Word of God and the word of humans in the communication between God and God’s people. Evans (1963:14) writes:

Older logics deal with propositions (statements, assertions); that is, they deal with relations between propositions and relations between terms of propositions. Modern biblical theology, however, emphasizes non-propositional language, both in its account of divine revelation (God’s ‘word’ to man) and in its account of human religious language (man’s word to God). In each case the language or ‘word’ is not (or is not merely) propositional; it is primarily a *self-involving activity*, divine or human. God does not (or does not merely) provide supernatural information concerning Himself, expressed in flat statements of fact; He ‘addresses’ man in an ‘event’ or ‘deed’ which commits Him to man and which expresses His inner self (*his emphasis*).

Biblical language shows the dimension of inter-personal address which from a theological perspective we expect might characterize some biblical texts such as “God is the creator of heaven and earth” in the biblical context or confession. It could involve the present reader in the biblical text which is spoken as a promise, warning, and proclamation. One makes specific self-involving commitments with respect to one’s recognition of status, attitudes, feeling, role and responsibility, and so on. This focus leads the speaker logically and naturally into a relationship of a certain kind between the speaker and the hearer according to the statement. Evans (1963:158) argues that the Word of God is the creative act which speaks the world into

being, and having institutional divine authority, appoints one to its role in the present world or promises one something. Thus:

In the biblical context, if I say, ‘God is my Creator’, I acknowledge my status as God’s obedient servant and possession, I acknowledge my role as God’s steward and worshipper, I acknowledge God’s gift of existence, and I acknowledge God’s self-commitment to me. This act of acknowledgement includes both Behabitive and Commissive elements.

The above statement demonstrates that the utterance “God is my Creator” contains a self-involving logic (Evans 1963:160). The statement “God is my Creator” reflects creed and confession, “God is my Lord”, and in the believing community, in which self-involvement is important, this adopts a stance towards the state of affairs according to uttering sounds. This biblical language in certain respects logically entails self-involving activity by the statement itself. Here, the statement’s logical grammar is very important for the hermeneutical task. For example, the statement, “the Creator made the world” and “Jones built the house” have the same form of grammatical structure in the third person past tense verb as well as three types of sentence structure.

These structures appear to be the same, but their logical grammar is totally different. The first sentence has a function of the stance that “the Creator made the world”, that is, because the Creator made the world, the Creator has the responsibility to keep and oversee the world, which contains implications of attitude and intention in those performatives such as future conduct – non-verbal conduct or verbal conduct. That is to say, this statement is a performative act as institutional-relation words which do not lose or lack behabitive (attitude) or commissive (intention) force and include as part of their meaning some indication of conduct which is thought to be appropriate (Evans 1963:56, 67).

Furthermore, the statement, “the Creator made the world” implies that “God is my creator”. The statement, “Jesus is my Lord”, entails the *self-description*, “I am a Christian” in the present life. Christians who see themselves as Christ’s servants are wholly at the disposal of their “Lord”, having obligation to God and God’s kingdom in accordance with the Word of God in everyday life. It means that in saying “the Creator made the world”, one does commit him/herself to any future conduct or supposes that he/she has a particular attitude and intention

or express their feeling, while a statement such as, “Jones built the house” does not do that; it can only convey a simple fact and state (Evans 1963:12). Therefore, the logic of self-involving language is often linked both to the kingdom of God as God’s performative action and to correlative human actions as implication of attitude in a particular situation, circumstance and state of affairs as the performative language in religious discourse. Accordingly, it can offer some insights into the relationship between God’s use of God’s word in self-involving activity and men’s use of words to talk about God in an event or deed as the term Creator or Lord is performative in the biblical context and confession of God’s kingdom.

As mentioned earlier, Austin classifies speech acts with their illocutionary force (involving “self-involving activity”), whereas Evans (1963:68) calls this a “self-involving force” in his classification of performatives.<sup>109</sup> However, there is no difference between the two in terms of the meaning of performative language as illocutionary force, except in terminology.<sup>110</sup> Austin’s classification of illocutionary actions into five classes such as a verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives is developed by Evans in a somewhat modified form to explain illocutionary force in terms of the self-involving activity in religious language. Evans (1963:38) identifies five primary illocutionary forces as a new logic of self-involvement on the basis of Austin’s idea of the performative force of language:

- (1) *Constatives* (class includes statements): bets, estimates, guesses, warnings, statements, etc.
- (2) *Commissives* (more-than-verbal commitment): covenant, promise, pledge, undertake, etc.
- (3) *Exercitives* (an exercise of authority): appoint, decree, order, name, give, etc.
- (4) *Behabitives* (concerning social behaviour): confess, glorify, worship, praise, etc.
- (5) *Verdictives* (class includes verdicts): judge, rate, find, grade, value, etc.

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<sup>109</sup> Austin’s (1975:6) performative language indicates “self-involving activity” in terms of its function and meaning in a communicative act in ordinary life which involves performance. According to Evans (1963:38), “Austin pointed out... this illocutionary force which I call performative force.”

<sup>110</sup> Evans (1963:39) says, “I use the label ‘performative’ rather than ‘speech-act-with-its-illocutionary force’; ‘I use the label ‘Constative’ rather than ‘Expositive’ for the fifth class (having retained the labels ‘Verdictive’, ‘Exercitive’, ‘Commissive’ and ‘Behabitive’)”.



On the classification of illocutionary actions, Evans (1963:32-37) proposes four types of illocutionary force – expressive, commissive, representative and directive, which require special consideration along these lines because of their importance in revealing the self-involving character of biblical language. This shows that each speech act with illocutionary force is particularly self-involving. Implications of intention, says Evans, are most prominent in those performatives which Austin calls commissives (promise, pledge, accept, undertake, engage, threaten, swear loyalty, declare as policy, take as wife, etc.). The implication of attitude is most prominent in expressives (Austin refers to these as behabitives – praise, thank, apologize, commend, blame, reprimand, glorify, worship, confess, welcome, protest, accuse, etc., in Evans 1963:29, 30). To put it more precisely, the illocutionary force in religious discourse seems to be a self-involving activity because it already contains the commitment to do something with the implication of intention, action, and attitude between God and the people of God in the context of the performative power of the words of promise in the Bible. It also produces a certain intended effect on the believer in the context of the kingdom of God.<sup>111</sup> This means that biblical language in the performative dimension of language force, as the Word of God, is closely linked to the words of human beings which do something. Evans (1963:35-37) remarks that:

It is probably true that most human language concerning God is *Behabitive* or *Commissive*; but this does not automatically eliminate the relevance of facts-factual presuppositions, and sometimes, factual content... For *Commissives* and *Exercitives* are no way of referring to what is the case, but are used to ‘create’ something: undertaking (for example, by a promise) or an institutional relation (for example, by a decree) (*his emphasis*).

The self-involving language in Scripture could be interpreted or understood as a commitment, a promise and an appointment to the believing community in accordance with the dynamic and powerful Word of God which has inherent divine force. Consequently, the logic of self-involving implies using illocutionary force to create the world of reality from the *Bible* to *contemporary life* across time and place. It is a matter of switching from “what the text meant” to “what the text means”, and this has new potential to establish continuity between the “biblical world” and the “contemporary world” through biblical illocutionary force in religious

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<sup>111</sup> The Bible repeatedly points the reader to warnings, commands, invitations, judgements, promises, or pledges of love (Thiselton 2006a:86).

language.

For example, the creation account (Gen 1:1-2:25) as a past event is written in a narrative format in which the reader was absent and not involved directly. Several statements occur in the text such as “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen 1:28). “The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food” (Gen 2:8-9). However, Evans has distinguished between two different logical language functions in the creation texts on the basis of Austin’s performative language which have implications of intention and attitude. In the context of the creation event, God acts as the agent of causal power which refers to simple events and God’s state of affairs with divine authority because the causal force, which is the result of an utterance, is not part of the utterance meaning and intention (Evans 1963:70-74).

On the other hand, the language of God’s command has exercitive force which implies promissory acts in most biblical texts, and it refers to God as a doer agent who does something with a particular intention for God’s people and God’s kingdom. This means that these are not merely creation stories of the past including the coming into existence (causal power) humankind; creation is also appointed a certain role (responsibility) and given a particular state of affairs by the reader. The self-involving language invites the reader into the biblical world even though the reader was absent there; he/she continues to operate across time and place from the past to the present. The reader is also involved in the creation event with a new status and responsibility as a Christian in the midst of contemporary daily life. Thus, the self-involving act invites trust, devotion, and obedience to the Word of God in the public domain.

### **3.4.1 An application of Evans’ primary contribution for Christian Ethics**

Self-involving language in the biblical text can be drawn upon in relation to the understanding of pneumatological epistemology. It is assumed that God speaks by doing things in and through

the Bible as God's performative action, which is a testimony of what God is already doing for us in Jesus Christ in the present world. Simply stated, biblical pneumatological epistemology can be used to explain the kingdom of God through self-involving language (illocutionary force) which not only points to what the Bible (but also the Trinity and God) is about (i.e., knowing the biblical text), but also to the value of actually performing the intent of the text as the people of God and the world in the divine discourse. In other words, in the biblical text, the self-involving character of the speech act lies at God's deeper performative action level which produces the meaning of the text according to the illocutionary point to the believer that is constitutive of the person of faith, such as specific moral conduct in a social community. Accordingly, God's self, as a self-communicative act, continuously addresses God's people through the Scripture, and God (speaker) reveals God's self through Jesus (the word) to those illuminated by the Holy Spirit (reception) (Vanhoozer 1998:456).<sup>112</sup> Therefore, God's performative action (self-involving activity) in Scripture shows God's being and identity in accordance with the work of the Holy Spirit, which creates the confession in the believing community that leads to ethical responses at the same time. This presupposes that the confession of faith carries ethical implications. (Schrage 1988:18-43). The following statement in 1 John 4:20<sup>113</sup> is a good example that explains the three aspects of such a speech act, as mentioned above:

- (1) John *utters* a specific statement, "I love God, but I hate my brother/sister" (*ἀγαπῶ τὸν θεόν καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶ*), in the *locutionary act*.
- (2) John *asserts* that, "*ἀγαπῶ τὸν θεόν καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶ*", depending on the certain context which might be construed as a warning, a command, an exhortation or an assertion to the believing community which is the *illocutionary act*.

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<sup>112</sup> According to Vanhoozer (1998:457), "If the father is the locator, the son is his preeminent illocution, Christ is God's definitive Word, the substantive content of his message. And the Holy Spirit-the condition and power of receiving the sender's message-is God the perlocutor, the reason that his words do not return to him empty" (Isa 55:11).

<sup>113</sup> "Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen" "*ἐάν τις εἴπῃ ὅτι Ἀγαπῶ τὸν θεόν, καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶ, ψεύστης ἐστίν· ὁ γὰρ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ὃν ἐώρακεν, τὸν θεὸν ὃν οὐχ ἐώρακεν οὐ δύναται ἀγαπᾶν*" (1 Jn 4:20, SBL).

- (3) John's statement, "ἀγαπῶ τὸν θεόν καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶ", performs an *exercitive* (or *assertive*) *action* in a *perlocutionary act* which causes a certain response or effect on the hearer to persuade, frighten or repent. When the hearers hear the sayings of John, if they change their mind of hatred to love for their brothers and sisters in a specific way, then, it is the result of the perlocutionary act which refers to the condition and power of receiving John's statement – it is God the Holy Spirit as the outcome of God's self-involving activity. This moral conduct reflects the Christian confession, "I do love God, God is my Lord" through the work of the Holy Spirit as God's saving activity because "the commandment we have from Him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also" (1 Jn 4:21).

From the above, 1 John 4:20 can be interpreted based on the self-involving logic as  $F(p)$ ; *love in confessing God* with a biblical content as well as an ethical response. From God's perspective (i.e., God's view of faith), the two cannot be separated from each other – "F" (love for God and the people) creates a propositional meaning " $p$ " as a biblical norm, and it already entails the fact that "God is my Lord" which produces the Christian life as a form of moral conduct in a real-life situation. Thus, Christian ethics is  $F(p)$ ; *love (a biblical content and ethical response) in confessing God* as re-performing a pneumatological God's self-involving activity in believers which opens up the biblical world anew in the present world. Christian ethics then becomes a perlocutionary action through God's illocutionary force; it causes a specific response in the Christian life. In this view, the Christian ethics from the perspective of SAT should be understood as the effect of a certain intended divine perlocutionary intentions for Christian life. Consequently, Christian ethics should not rest so much on human behaviour or the human being, but on the perlocutionary action which is the process of soliciting the intended outcome of a sequence of divine illocutionary acts in the work of the Holy Spirit due to God's performative action that causes a change in the attitude and mind of the believer towards God's intention and will. In Christian ethics, therefore, the primary driving force behind human behaviour is the Holy Spirit as an agent at work in the believer through God's self-involving activity, rather than the good hearts or the motives of the people.

### 3.5 ML Pratt and HP Grice's Co-operative Principle (CP) – The Possibility of the open world of the text to the new reality of the world

One of the central claims of Searle's (1979:17) speech act theory is that, "speaking a language is a rule-governed form of behaviour". This has provided useful insight and served as a basic communication and hermeneutical resource for many analyses which deal with spoken language in ordinary life as well as literary discourse (written language) in the text. In a communicative situation between the speaker and the hearer, oral language can be described by spoken language and unspoken language including various social settings, customs and rules in a community. Pratt (1977:69)<sup>114</sup> explains the point as follows:

Unless we are foolish enough to claim that people organize their oral anecdotes around patterns they learn from reading literature, we are obliged to draw the more obvious conclusion that the formal similarities between natural narrative and literary narrative derive from the fact that at some level of analysis they are utterances of the same type. And, let me repeat, their identity goes beyond minimal narratively. From the point of view of structural poetics, this claim implies a redefinition of the relation between literary and nonliterary uses of language. It means that most of the features which poeticsians believed constituted the "literariness" of novels are not "literary" at all. They occur in novels not because they are novels (i.e., literature) but because they are members of some other more general category of speech acts.

This shows that all language can be regarded in communication theory as a useful starting point of the speech act analysis of a literary text. The statements are made "the intentions, attitudes, and expectations of the participants, the relationships existing between participants and generally, the unspoken rules and conventions that are understood to be in play when an utterance is made and received" (Pratt 1977:86). That is to say,

Literature itself is a speech context. And as with any utterance, the way people produce and understand literary works depends enormously on unspoken, culturally-shared knowledge of the rules, conventions and expectations that are in play when language is used in that context (Pratt 1977:86).

It demonstrates that all human communication is governed by rules which make communication possible in a certain circumstance. It also implies that if a speech act is to be concluded successfully, it must meet appropriateness or felicity conditions between the speaker

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<sup>114</sup> Pratt makes use of the Cooperative Principle and maxims suggested by the linguist Grice in a series of lectures in 1967 which were not published until 1975, and even then not entirely. Both Pratt and Grice argue that the important thing in language use is the success of an utterance. For more information, see A. Avramides, *Meaning and Mind: An Examination of a Gricean Account of Language* (Cambridge, MA & London: MIT Press, 1989).

and the hearer as common molecules<sup>115</sup> because felicity conditions in speech acts, such as the rules or expectations, create meanings within a given locution, showing that we have already understood the situation as propositional information or fact. The context of a speech act is the understanding and belief (mostly implicit) held by both the speaker and the hearer in a communicative act with a common purpose, a co-operative effort undertaken in a mutually accepted direction towards a given end. This implies that human communication is governed by “a rough general principle” which participants are expected to observe, and which is assumed to be operating in all conversations, that is, the co-operative principle (CP). Simply, the CP is observed at the level of what is implied (Grice 1975b:52). Accordingly, the speaker should make his/her conversational contribution “such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which [he/she is] engaged” (Grice 1975b:45). On this general principle, Grice (1975b:45-50) proposes four maxims as general appropriateness conditions which regulate verbal interaction that are expected to be in force when any speech act takes place between a speaker and the hearer. These are:

(1) *The maxim of Quantity*

The contribution should be as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange); not more, not less. “*Be economical*”

(2) *The maxim of Quality*

The contribution should be true, that is, not intentionally false or misleading, and not one for which there is inadequate evidence. “*Be sincere*”

(3) *The maxim of Relation*

The contribution should be relevant to that particular topic. “*Be relevant*”

(4) *The maxim of Manner*

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<sup>115</sup> In a communicative situation, appropriateness conditions “represent rules which users of language assume to be in force in their verbal dealings with each other; they form part of the knowledge which speakers of a language share and on which they rely in order to use the language correctly and effectively, both in producing and understanding utterances. An account of the appropriateness conditions for the illocutionary act of asking a question, for example, would include the following statements; (1). Speaker does not know the answer (2). Speaker believes it is possible hearer knows the answer (3). It is not obvious that hearer will provide the answer at the time without being asked (4). Speaker wants to know the answer” (Pratt 1977:81-82).

The contribution should be as clear as possible (brief, orderly) and avoiding ambiguity or obscurity of expression. It is not related to *what is said* but, rather, *to how what is said is to be said*. “*Be perspicuous or clear*”

These maxims in conversation show that speech exchange is a rule-governed form of behaviour. However, we should also recognize that much of the speech act in these maxims normally operate implicitly in a particular situation in order to facilitate communication with one another, and the circumstance should be resolved in the text or spoken language by implicature.<sup>116</sup>

Moreover, all human rules are not always successfully carried out, and sometimes rules can be flouted in certain circumstances, and “whenever one or more of these rules is transgressed, the necessity of reconstructing the meaning of an utterance by implicature arises” (Botha 1991:68). What Grice (1975b:49) regards as flouting a maxim is particularly important for literary texts, as this is the only possible kind of non-fulfilment in a literary discourse that the flouting or deliberate non-fulfilment of the CP in maxims can necessitate implicature:

He may FLOUT a maxim; that is, he may BLATANTLY fail to fulfill it. On the assumption that the speaker is able to fulfill the maxim and do so without violating another maxim (because of a clash), is not opting out, and is not, in view of the blatancy of his performance, trying to mislead, the hearer is faced with a minor problem: how can his saying what he did say be reconciled with the supposition that he is observing the overall CP? This situation is one which characteristically gives rise to a conversational implicature (*his emphasis*).

Here, an even more important principle which underlies the CP is deliberately flouted or breached to fulfil a maxim through implicature because something is implied in the conversation exchange to produce more effective communication in accordance with the speaker’s/author’s certain intention. Furthermore, the CP and maxims have potential to be unintentionally non-fulfilled. In this sense, the speaker is observing the CP while the hearer

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<sup>116</sup> Grice (1975b:43-44) says, “I wish to introduce, as terms of art, the verb *implicate* and the related nouns *implicature* (cf. *implying*) and *implicatum* (cf. *what is implied*). The point of this manoeuvre is to avoid having, on each occasion, to choose between this or that member of the family of verbs for which *implicate* is to do general duty” (*his emphasis*).

usually tries to decode what is being said in the utterance of the speaker at the locution level which contains the assumption that the CP is still in force. That is to say, the hearer, in interpreting the sayings of speaker, “will make all the deductions and inferences necessary to maintain the assumption that the speaker is observing the CP” (Grice 1975b:154). Pratt’s (1977:155) illustration is one good example that explains the CP in the context of conversational implicatures:

A: I have a headache

B: what time is it?

B could be implicating that he believes the time of day has something to do with A’s headache, or that he does not wish to discuss A’s headache, or that it may be a suitable time for A to leave off doing whatever has given him the headache. Here, as in many cases of implicature, more than one explanation is possible, a fact which is exploited a great deal by writers of literature and also by politicians, press agents, advertisers, and other speakers interested in multiple meanings.

The above illustration shows that the problematic conversation exchanges a situation that has arisen with the apparent breach of the CP, which can be resolved by implicature. It is the process of discovering what lies behind the notion of implicature in what is being said depending on the situation and operation of the CP in making sense of a speech act. According to Pratt (1977:163), “Exploitation is virtually the only kind of intentional nonfulfillment of maxims that the literary speech situation allows, that intentional failure to fulfill a maxim in literature always counts as flouting and is thus always intended to be resolved by implicature.” This indicates that whenever maxims are flouted, in literature, there is always the author’s particular intention to the reader that it is resolved through implicature in the context of the text. This strategy is frequently used by authors who are interested in multiple meanings with gaps and *aporias*, such as in the Gospel or the biblical text through the implicature that many of the elements of communication, such as irony, symbolism, parables and metaphor produce meaning and influence the reader’s response.

### **3.5.1 An application of Pratt and Grice’s primary contribution for Christian Ethics**

Using SAT to engage biblical passages, especially in which flouting occurs such as the parables,



or the irony of Jesus in the context of the message of the kingdom, could offer new ways of looking at this literary peculiarity as a sort of hermeneutical tool. It could help us to find its implied meaning and our proper response, but it also creates a novel way of practicing the Christian faith and life. Essentially, it is possible to engage the hermeneutical problem of unlocking biblical ideas in a way which involves the Scripture in the life of the believer. An exposition of John 2:1-12, “The Wedding at Cana”,<sup>117</sup> as Jesus’s message of the kingdom of God is one good illustration of this point. Some Christians understand this biblical passage to mean, “obedience creates a miracle” or “we should obey the word of Jesus” in the propositional aspects of the text. Unfortunately, this approach does not make any point about applying the text in a real-life situation of the Christian life because it overlooks the nature of CP in the biblical text. For instance, an exchange between Mary and Jesus is considered below:

Mary: (Situation: when the wine ran out) “They have no wine”

*“Οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν”*

Jesus: “Woman, what can I do for you?”<sup>118</sup> “My hour has not yet come”

*“Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὐπω ἦκει ἡ ὥρα μου”*

The above conversation clearly demonstrates the idea of flouting maxims between Mary and Jesus, but in the exchange Jesus was rather cooperative. Jesus intentionally chose to flout the maxim in order to reveal himself as the bridegroom of God’s people at the wedding feast in Cana. The biblical image of Jesus as Lord, the son of God and the bridegroom points to Jesus’ messianic character in the narrative sequence in Jesus’ statement (cf. France 2000:181). In the ancient wedding context, it was the responsibility of the bridegroom to provide wine for his guests (McWhirter 2006:49; Villeneuve 2016:124)<sup>119</sup> and Jesus’ hour (time) as promissory language also implies that Jesus as the Messiah is the bridegroom in the context of the kingdom

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<sup>117</sup> Cahall (2016:139) points out that, “In his ministry Jesus will even proclaim that the kingdom of God is like a wedding feast (Mt 22:1-14). At Cana, as the Messiah who came to usher in the reign or kingdom of God, Jesus’s presence was a prophetic action that similarly ‘proclaimed’ the kingdom of God as a wedding feast (Mt 22:1-14).”

<sup>118</sup> My translation in Greek is supplied for a more precise analysis.

<sup>119</sup> According to Villeneuve (2016:124), “This seems to be a classic example of Johannine irony: while the characters in the story see Jesus as a simple guest, by means of suggestive hints and irony the reader is given a deeper insight into his role in the story.” In addition, McWhirter (2006:49) notes that “John hints that the Messiah who provides an abundance of good wine is a bridegroom.”

of God (Wheaton 2015:54-57).<sup>120</sup> In this viewpoint, the hearers know who Jesus is and then, accept /confess Jesus as Lord and Messiah which at the same time indicates who they are, what they ought to do and how to live the ordinary daily life according to the CP. Therefore, in this situation, these maxims implicitly show that Jesus is the bridegroom of his people as the Messiah, and does not talk about Christian obedience in the propositional content of the text as a superficial statement.<sup>121</sup>

The CP in the biblical text helps us to understand and interpret specific unclear expressions through implicature. It also concretises the particular identity of Christians through the flouting of maxims in Jesus' statement which is also represented themselves as Christian communal conviction, confession, or creed and which is based on Jesus' messianic intention to contemporary readers in practical ways. Hence, the CP demonstrates who we are in the Christian community, what we ought to do as Christians in the present world as well as who Jesus is as we identify Jesus' flouting maxims in relation to the kingdom. The flouting of a maxim in the Bible is seen as some sort of failure, but it fulfils the maxim with specific intent through the implicit form which creates a new reality of the world. A new reality of the world could be produced by applying the biblical word in our daily lives as it provides a purpose for the Christian way of life through the illocutionary act to the world. Therefore, it is important to show how the CP influences the Christian life according to its implicature in relation to the

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<sup>120</sup> Wheaton (2015:54-57) notes that, "The specifically Messianic character of the salvation depicted by John is indicated by the abundance of wine traditionally associated with the Messianic age. This theme is traceable from the oracle of Jacob regarding the future rule of Judah (Gen 49:10-12) and the climactic prophecy of Amos in which the restoration of Davidic rule is accompanied by hills and mountains flowing with 'sweet wine' (9:11-14) to the late first-century CE Jewish association of the Messiah's advent with superabundant wine (2 Bar 29:3-6). The association of the Messianic age with a wedding celebration is widely attested in the New Testament. In Matthew 22:2, Jesus likens the coming of the kingdom of God 'to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.' Revelation 19:6-9 refers to the consummation of Christ's kingdom as 'the marriage of the Lamb.' Paul also uses the metaphor of a bridegroom and his bride to portray the relationship of Christ to the church (cf. 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:23ff., though the authorship of the letter is, of course, disputed). The prominence of this motif in the Jewish background as well as the New Testament strengthens the likelihood that the scene at Cana casts Jesus as the Messianic bridegroom of national expectation. Another important, though subtler, facet of the account is the use of words marking time. At the start of the narrative, Jesus' hour 'had not yet come' (2:4). But his willingness to meet the need of the celebration brought about a work that constituted 'the beginning of his signs' (2:11) of which the last would be the cross... In the course of the wedding at Cana, the timing of Jesus' ministry becomes intertwined with the timing of the wedding, such that Jesus' hour undergoes a progression from not yet begun (οὐπω) to beginning (ἀρχήν). The Messianic bridegroom has arrived, and the hour of his wedding now draws near."

<sup>121</sup> John 1 proclaims Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah.

message of the kingdom of God.

### 3.6 Refining the principles of a SAT approach to exegesis

In order to rediscover the meaning of the kingdom and its contemporary ethical implication in the Bible, our Christian life should be engaged in “a rule-governed form of behaviour”. This is because the use of language (even text) is explained through certain constitutive rules that govern human behaviour (Searle 1971:40). To put it differently, propositional content can be understood as having certain “constitutive rules,” which constitute and regulate activities, and often have the form, “X counts as Y in context C” (Searle 1969:35). For example, in the first Beatitude, “*The poor in spirit counts as having the kingdom of heaven in the context of the promises of God’s blessing*”, and Acts 2:21<sup>122</sup> can be expressed as “*One who is calling the name of the Lord is counted as having salvation in the circumstance of the promises of God.*” This focus reflects on the confession of certain communities which produces a particular identity as new patterns of deed, which tell us who we are in society as well as who God is as we identify God’s illocutionary force in human history.

Actually, the ethical conception of the kingdom of God is itself “a rule-governed form of behaviour”, for it contains certain “constitutive rules” such as the value system of righteousness in Christianity’s social context. Communal confessions and creeds (conventions) are involved in these constitutive rules which relate to all kinds of non-verbal conduct behind the language. It is clear that moral sensibilities are about what is right and what is wrong, and these relate to what we should do and what kinds of human institutions and practices are necessary to support the shared life that we live. This consideration can go beyond the mere identification of already existing patterns of behaviour and create new identities and lifestyles as well as discover ways of improving the present human condition. We are reminded of the meaning of the righteous kingdom and its life of righteousness as Christians in everyday life, and the approach points to what will be, what can be, and what ought to be.

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<sup>122</sup> “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).

In this regard, the non-linguistic elements help us to recognise where the illocutionary act operates, and to see that the illocutionary act creates “new realities.” This point can lead the believer to engage the biblical text which continues to influence and shape the contemporary world through new practices of Christian faith and ethics. How then does the believing congregation discover the kingdom from Jesus’ message in a more practical way, and particularly so in terms of biblical ethics, from the perspective of SAT? How does the message of the kingdom continue to challenge the Christian community and the world?

To answer these questions, the following three questions would also help to refine the use of SAT in relation to exegesis and the ethics of the kingdom:<sup>123</sup>

*(1) Which constitutive rules and institutional facts govern this biblical passage?*

*(2) What kind of illocutionary force  $F(p)$  does this biblical passage perform?*

*(3) How does the illocutionary force  $F(p)$  in the text determine the kind of direction of fit that could build up the people of God in and for the world in order to fulfil the kingdom of God as an alternative reality?*

These questions would provide an interpretative methodology as well as insight into how Christian ethics should be understood in the context of the kingdom. The distinction will show a framework with different ethical dimensions regarding Matthew 25:1-13, the Parable of the Ten Virgins<sup>124</sup> as explained below.

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<sup>123</sup> I have used and revised Duck-Hyun Kim’s hermeneutical questions and insights from his approach to SAT to support my idea. See Duck-Hyun Kim, “Reframing the Hermeneutical Question as Part of Its Homiletical Responsibility: Making Extensive Use of the Speech Act Theory” in *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society*, 16 (2016), pp.40. See also Duck-Hyun Kim’s PhD Thesis, “*The Homiletical Appropriation of Biblical Passages in the Light of Speech Act Theory: Preaching as a Performance of the Biblical Text*” (Stellenbosch University Ph. D Thesis, 2014:91-94).

<sup>124</sup> I have selected the Parable of the Ten Virgins because it serves as a good illustration of the main argument of this thesis. The parable has ethical implications and it illustrates the religious linguistic characteristics of the

*(1) Which constitutive rules and institutional facts govern this biblical passage?*

The Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 shows the totally different cultural forms between an ancient and a modern wedding ceremony. In the ancient world, the betrothal ceremony typically took place in the house of the bride's father, after which the young woman remained in her father's house for several years. When the wedding day came, the bride was adorned and then taken in a festive procession to the groom's house at night escorted with lanterns. The groom would then go out to receive the bride and bring her into his home to a celebration that could last as long as seven days. It was understood that the groom would bring his bride back to his house after observing a banquet at the home of the bride; therefore, the virgins waited at the home of the groom.<sup>125</sup>

However, in this text, it is not certain where the feast took place or what exactly is being described, and the text does not talk about the bride and groom in detail even though it is about a wedding feast. What then do the terms virgin, bride and groom mean? What are the qualifications and the duties of the bride and groom? What should the virgin do at the wedding ceremony?<sup>126</sup> These constitutive rules and institutional facts would help Christian ethics to

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kingdom of God in the light of SAT.

<sup>125</sup> For further information on this issue, see K R Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008:510).

<sup>126</sup> According to Senior (1998:274), the term virgin in the Greek is *parthenoi*: "The NRSV translation 'bridesmaids' is not literal and assumes they are part of the bride's party. If the setting is the groom's house, they may be associated with his household or family. In any case, they are part of the wedding celebration and are to meet the groom with lighted lamps when he returns." However, Alford (1980:248) cites the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14 and the Parable of the Virgins in Matthew 25. He notes that, "In both of the wedding parables the bride does not appear – for she, being the Church, is in fact the aggregate of the guests in the one case, and of the companions in the other." Similarly, Lange (1978:248) notes that: "The virgins are not merely companions of the bride, but representatives of the bride, the Church... The Church, in her aggregate and ideal unity, is the bride; the members of the Church, as individually called, are guests; in their separation from the world, and expectation of the Lord's coming, they are His virgins." Davies and Allison (1988: 394-400) argue that, "Matthew already knew the tradition which depicted the church as a virgin or a group of virgins." Furthermore, in Matthew 13:25, the response, "Lord, Lord", suggests that the foolish virgins belong to the Christian community. In other words, the virgins represent the bride and the Church, that is, the believing community. I support the views above (rather than Senior's argument) that these messages about the kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching and preaching are actualised only within the Christian community. Jesus' parables about the kingdom were meant for only His disciples and not those on the outside (Matthew 13:10-17, Mark 4:10-12 and Luke 8:9-10), which demonstrates that the words of Jesus constitute institutional facts having divine power to establish patterns of behaviour for everyday life only within the Christian community.

appreciate the identity and essence of the illocutionary act in the passage in order to find its meaning without distortion and to help one to act properly as a believer in relation to the text.

*(2) What kind of illocutionary force  $F(p)$  does this biblical passage perform?*

In this parable, while the foolish virgins went to buy oil, the bridegroom came and the wise virgins went with him into wedding feast, but the others did not return until the door was shut. This situation and conversation can be seen as  $F(p)$  because every locutionary act as a literary structure or literary discourse “ $p$ ” is a part of the total illocutionary act “ $F(p)$ ” (cf. Searle 1968:405) which contains a certain force “ $F$ ” that communicates the speaker’s particular purpose and state of affairs to the hearer. Thus:

Bridesmaids (foolish virgins): “*Κύριε κύριε ἄνοιξον ἡμῖν*” (Lord, lord, open to us).

Bridegroom: “*Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς*” “*γρηγορεῖτε οὖν, ὅτι οὐκ οἶδατε τὴν ἡμέραν οὐδὲ τὴν ὥραν*” (Truly I tell you, I do not know you. Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour).<sup>127</sup>

The conversation above indicates the speaker’s situation or identity and the specific intention which can be represented by the proposition ( $p$ ) constituting an illocutionary force point  $F$  (the day and the hour, that is, Jesus’ time) as exhortation “ $E(p)$ .” In other words, the proposition of Jesus’ day and hour is regarded as an eschatological exhortation “ $E(p)$ ” which also links the promissory language “ $Pr(p)$  (Jesus’ time)”. The “ $Pr(p)$ ” could offer the critical clue to the message – Jesus is the bridegroom which is not mentioned overtly in the biblical text. In the Bible, the words of exhortation or warning contain a directive word which alludes to a way of speaking about the end of time as stated in the phrase “*ἡμέραν* or *ὥραν*” (“the day or the hour”) in the text above, according to God’s promissory language as a performative action.<sup>128</sup> From

<sup>127</sup> For Hagner (1995:730), “the point here is not the avoidance of literal sleep (creating an unnecessary tension with the preceding verses – the wise virgins did sleep) but spiritual wakefulness, that is, keeping oneself in a state of constant readiness for the coming of the son of Man (cf. Matthew 24:42-43).”

<sup>128</sup> Most scholars (Davies & Allison 1988:392; Senior 1998:275-276; France 2000:177-183) argue that the statement, “Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour (Matthew 25:13),” is used metaphorically to prepare the believer in thoughtful readiness for the certain but unknown hour of the *Parousia*. Matthew had already earlier identified Jesus as the ‘bridegroom’ in a Gospel passage with strong eschatological tones (see Matthew 9:15). Thus, Hagner (1995:727) points out that “Matthew continues to address the importance of readiness for the coming of the Son of Man. The coming of the bridegroom and the wedding banquet have

it comes the designation “eschatological,” which is necessary for the action of preparing for the end of time in the contemporary life (Campbell 2000:39). To put it more precisely, the illocutionary force creates different responses of fear, regret or hope in the hearer. In this sense, the “E(p)” asks the hearer or believing community to prepare for the end of time and it represents a Christological message as Jesus is the hidden bridegroom in the Parables of the Ten Virgins under the implied condition of “Pr(p)” in the text (cf. France 2000:181).

Thus, one could assert that biblical ethics should therefore rest on the illocutionary force “F(p)” such as “E(p)” in the context of “Pr(p)” as God’s promise in Jesus Christ which is achieved by the Holy Spirit as God’s saving activity in the believer. The illocutionary force “E(p)” in religious discourse tends to be a self-involving activity since it contains the commitment to do something with implications of intention, action, and attitude as “Pr(p)” between God and the people of God in the context of the performative power of words in the Bible. It also creates a certain intended effect on the believer regarding the kingdom of God. The statement, “γρηγορεῖτε οὖν, ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἡμέραν οὐδὲ τὴν ὥραν” (“Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour”) as a self-involving statement, functions as the stance commitment entailed by the Jesus’ situation or identity, and the particular purpose which includes implications of attitude and intention in these performatives such as future conduct.

On the other hand, the statement, “Κύριε κύριε ἄνοιξον ἡμῖν” (“Lord, Lord, open to us”), implies faith in the statement, “Jesus is my Lord” as *self-description* in the self-involving statement, “I am a Christian”, which in the present shows an obligation to God and God’s kingdom in accordance with the Word of God. In this sense, the self-involving language in the biblical text can lead to the understanding of pneumatological epistemology which assumes that God speaks by doing things in and through the Bible as God’s performative action, which is a testimony of what God is already doing for us in Jesus Christ in everyday life. That is to say, in the biblical text, the self-involving character of the speech act lies at God’s deeper performative action level which produces the meaning of the text according to the illocutionary point to the believer, which is constitutive of the person of faith such as the specific moral conducts in a social

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messianic associations (cf. Matthew 22:1-14), which make the parable particularly effective.”



community.

Indeed, the execution of illocutionary force in the Bible represents and performs God's exhortation "E(*p*)", warning "W(*p*)" and promise "Pr(*p*)" in Jesus Christ and its testimony and illumination by Holy Spirit in the Christian life. Hence, this invisible illocutionary action in the Bible can prove the work of Holy Spirit in the believers and establish continuity between the "*biblical world*" and the "*contemporary world*" through the biblical illocutionary force in religious language as reality. In this case, Christian ethical theory's hermeneutical tasks and methods based on SAT should involve the process of *RGIF* (*re-enactment of God's illocutionary force*) in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit in the believing community. Therefore, in Christian ethics, the main driving force behind human behaviour is the Holy Spirit as the agent of doing in the believer through God's self-involving activity (illocutionary force) for the sake of the kingdom of God in the present life.

(3) *How does the illocutionary force F(p) in the text determine the kind of direction of fit that could build up the people of God in and for the world in order to fulfil the kingdom of God as an alternative reality?*

Largely, this parable is about the watchfulness, readiness, and faithfulness of the believers regarding the day or the hour of the Lord as a language of *exhortation* (Kümmel 1957:54-59; Marshall 1963:40-43; Gundry 1994:500-502). In SAT, the illocutionary force "E(*p*)" serves as the direction of fit which refers to doing something which directs the passage to the hearer/reader between the propositional content and illocutionary force as a specific action which has a world to match the words. This view pertains to the illocutionary effect or response in the text which creates the perlocutionary effect as well as the perlocutionary action. We call this phenomenon the "*perlocutionary ethical response*" (PER), and it indicates "the norm of Christian life" or "Christian ethics". The *PER* is a perlocutionary action in real Christian life situations which means the intention of the illocutionary force in the Bible creates a certain believer's responsibility such as moral conduct in accordance with the Word of God, that is, the directedness of the illocutionary effect in the text as a particular intention by the people of God and the world.



Accordingly, Christian ethics should consider both the moral content and its praxis as illocutionary force in the Bible and *PER* because the illocutionary force produces the *PER* and pays attention to the direction of fit in order to act rightly in terms of the utterance of statements. The parable does not just remind us of the need for watchfulness, readiness, and faithfulness in view of the day of the Lord, it also urges us to do something to fulfil God's will and God's kingdom in daily life today (Henry 1961:372). In this regard, Christian ethics can find its identity in the direction of fit. This point implies that the believer should live their everyday life with true Christian identity, and by faith in the language of exhortation such as "Keep awake". Therefore, the illocutionary force *F* such as exhortation "*E(p)*" relates to the implications of the kingdom of God for moral human actions in the present life.<sup>129</sup>

### 3.7 Summary and conclusion of chapter

This chapter has explored the notion of speech act theory in linguistic philosophy in the works of Austin, Searle, Evans, Pratt and Grice. The theory offers essential hermeneutical impressionability in the interpretation of the Bible and helps one grasp the genuine meaning of the text and to act properly in accordance with the communicative intent between God and the believers in a way which involves the Bible in the life of the contemporary reader.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Senior (1998:274) notes that a few rabbinic texts refer to "oil" as symbolic of good deeds (e.g., *Num. Rab.* 13:15-16) and that the Parable of the Ten Virgins emphasizes doing good deeds as a way of preparing for the end time. Hare (1993:284-285) also affirms that Matthew presents the oil as a symbol of good works while Luther believed that the oil represents faith.

<sup>130</sup> How do we know or find the author's intent in the biblical text? How does one know the genuine meaning and the proper action? To be brief, in the light of SAT, the only case where a word or text has meaning is when a person does or has done something with the word. This perspective considers meaning as communication. "Meaning is a matter of intending to convey a message to another person. A speaker intends to produce certain effects - notably, understanding - on a hearer" (Vanhoozer 1998:211). It enables an interactive process of communication between author and hearer to do something. The action creates the meaning of the text, which produces in the reader [a compulsion](#) to do what the language provokes according to the illocutionary force in the text. This is because "meaning is conceived as the outcome of a creative interchange between the author of a text and its readers" (Tovey 1997:22). In other words, "meaning is a matter of communicative action: both the doing and the resultant deed. To be precise, meaning is a three-dimensional communicative action, with form and matter (propositional content), energy and trajectory (illocutionary force), and teleology or final purpose (perlocutionary effect)" (Vanhoozer 1998:218). As Austin (1975:151) pointed out, successful communication (meaning) occurs only when there is a response to the illocutionary force (*F(p)* which means that a statement contains both the locutionary and illocutionary acts at the same time) within a proper action at the perlocution level which

The authors identify seven essential themes in SAT. The first is that speaking a language is the performance of an act. Second, this performative utterance can be divided into three aspects, namely the locutionary (the performance of an act of saying something), the illocutionary (the performance of an act in saying something), and the perlocutionary act (what we bring about or achieve by saying something). Third, the illocutionary action is the force of what we do in saying something according to the illocutionary point (speaker's purpose) to promise, warn or exhort the hearer. Fourth, SAT operates on principles or constitutive rules and it is linked to all kinds of institutional facts (non-verbal behaviour, convention). Fifth, SAT assumes that a proposition is always represented in the performance of an illocutionary act as  $F(p)$  which indicates the direction of fit between words and the world as reality. Sixth, language often involves action and its certain circumstance which shows self-involving activity as illocutionary force. Seventh, communicative participants are expected to observe that which is assumed to be operating in all conversations, namely the co-operative principle (CP) which is observed at the level of what is implicated in the conversation situation.

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demonstrates that complete understanding of an utterance should contain all three dimensions: locution, illocution and perlocution. In this sense, meaning is constructed by the communicative act between an author and a reader. The author's intent represents the illocutionary force as an act such as promise, warning, and exhortation (see Austin's classification of illocutionary actions). The intent of the speaker in the language act is communicated in the form of an intentional act in accordance with the speaker's specific intent to the reader to act in a certain way. A Biblical text expresses a particular divine purpose such as promise, warning, and exhortation, all of which do something to the believer in accordance with the Word of God. Thus, to [seek to uncover](#) ~~know~~ the [intended genuine](#) meaning and the proper action in a biblical text, we first find the illocutionary force in the text. This is because the illocutionary act is the force of what the author said. It is connected with what the reader does, thus producing the intended effect of what has been said as the perlocutionary action on the reader (proper response). The author's intent - through the illocutionary force - makes the reader do something in accordance with the word, which thus produces a proper action (the perlocutionary action) such as trust, obey, persuade, frighten or alarm in the reader. In short, in the perspective of SAT, meaning can be considered as an action through the three-dimensional communicative action of locution, illocution and perlocution between the author and the reader. If that is so, we must ask: How can we be sure that it is a clear meaning and appropriate action? To answer this question, we must think back to the characteristics of illocutionary acts *in a social construction or a certain situation*. Due to the fact that language is used in varying social contexts, it contains non-verbal elements such as diverse cultures, lifestyles, history, tradition, values, and community beliefs and so on as a basis for social rules. It indicates that "speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behaviour" (Searle 1969:12). For example, the statement "I do" has different meanings depending on the situation. In a marriage ceremony, it means that a person decides to live the rest of her or his life as someone's spouse. On the other hand, in a court, it means that a person decides to follow the word of judge. Thus, we can know the meaning and the proper action where the illocutionary acts occur *when relating them to their social context*.

From these main themes in SAT, Christian ethics can discover new biblical moral sensibility and specific practical directions by observing illocutionary acts in Scripture, thereby distinguishing between the *meaning of what the Bible says* (proposition) and the *force of what the Bible says* (illocution act). Since often Christian ethics depends on biblical intent in the Bible (cf. Birch 2011:27-33) or on the message of the kingdom proclaimed by Jesus (Chilton & McDonald 1987:19-31), to know exactly what Christian ethics means or aims to do, first, we should know what the Bible says and what the kingdom of God means in the words of Jesus. In order to recognize the meaning of the text more fully and to draw moral dimensions from it, we should not simply refer to propositional meaning or theological principles in Scripture as norms of the Christian life. Rather, the focus should be on the illocution level of the text because in SAT, only illocution is able to determine meaning and to act in line with the kind of biblical language such as warning  $W(p)$ , promise  $Pr(p)$ , blessing  $B(p)$ , and so on (cf. Searle 1969:31). Unfortunately, previous studies of Christian ethics seem to concentrate largely on the propositional aspect (locution level) in the Bible and its effect as response (perlocutionary level) and not enough on illocutionary acts. That is to say, the meaning of what the Bible says (locution) and the response of saying something from the Bible (perlocution) do not amount to the meaning of the text as the original biblical authors intended and it also cannot make one do something in accordance with what the text says. Therefore, illocutionary acts can refine the meaning of the ethics of the kingdom and an appropriate response to it, while providing hermeneutical insight into biblical ethics.

In relating the meaning of *what God says* (locution level) to *the force of what God says* (illocution level) (cf. Austin 1975:108), it is assumed that *God is a doer as agent* because God supplies the force in saying something (what God is already doing for us in the Words of God), which relates God's role or work with the utterance in sayings such as warning  $W(p)$ , promise  $Pr(p)$ , and blessing  $B(p)$  to the people of God in order to attain God's particular intention for the kingdom of God in ordinary life. Stated differently, the illocutionary act of God as  $F(p)$  and its energy are continuously being echoed in the present world which bridges the gap between the written world of the Bible and the contemporary world as a new reality or world through illocutionary force. In other words, God is a *doer as agent* with illocutionary force in what God is saying about Christian moral life. In this sense, Christian ethics should be a "*re-enactment*

*of God's illocutionary force*" (RGIF) in Christians' lives. The Holy Spirit as God's performative action invites the people of God into the world of the Bible with a dynamic and powerful force and drives them in the present world according to the Word of God. In Christian ethics, God (the Holy Spirit) is *a doer (agent)* who participates actively *in the believers* in order to fulfil the kingdom of God not simply *as a helper* who does something *to the believers*. Therefore, we should consider God's performative action (illocutionary force) as "self-involving activity" in Christian ethics by observing the illocutionary act in Scripture in order to refine the modern ethical theory.

In the next chapter, we shall explore how these hermeneutical methods based on illocutionary force can help reintroduce the presence of the kingdom of God based on the threefold locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. We shall also focus on the notion of ethical direction and its implications for ordinary life. The three levels can be related to three basic Christian ethical theories, namely virtue ethics (areteological theories), duty ethics (deontological theories), and consequence ethics (teleological theories). This understanding helps to clarify the necessary role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life by relating the meaning of a righteous kingdom and its life of righteousness between aspects of Christian ethics and praxis, and point to what is to be, what can be, and what ought to be.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE INTERFACE BETWEEN HERMENEUTICS AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS: THE PRESENCE OF THE KINGDOM AS GOD'S DIVINE SPEECH ACT

#### 4.1 Chapter Introduction

In the previous chapter, we presented an alternative moral linguistic epistemology based on SAT for an ethical hermeneutic method related to the performative ethics of the kingdom of God. We argued that SAT could serve to inform Christian ethics for the ethical hermeneutical task, and ethical praxis as the “*re-enactment of God's illocutionary force*” (RGIF) in the Bible. It could also serve as a “*perlocutionary ethical response*” (PER) for contemporary believers. The approach suggests that biblical moral content produces ethical meaning and performative action by observing illocutionary acts in Scripture (which is the inherent linguistic force of the text itself). This approach bridges the gap between Scriptures (*the meaning of the ethics of the kingdom*) and its praxis (*the performance of the ethics of the kingdom*) as a hermeneutical tool. It provides for the reconceptualization of Christian ethics based on a lived engagement with the Bible rather than simply focussing the Bible as a series of past narratives. In this view, passages in the Bible remain an expression of God's ongoing revelation which finds expression in Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God.

Thus, the words of Jesus should form the pattern for Christian action in the confessing community, and his identity should inform the content of the ethics of the kingdom of God. The question is, how then do we explain the relationship between the presence of the kingdom (which is God's reign), and Christian ethics, in a way that would dissolve the tension between the past, present and future in the message of the kingdom as proclaimed by Jesus? How does the notion of the kingdom of God relate to the three basic traditional forms of Christian ethics, namely virtue, duty, and consequence ethics in ordinary life? How do we act as witnesses of the kingdom by relating the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of the people of God according to the Word of God in our present lives?

To answer these questions, Christian ethics should recognise the message of the kingdom in the sayings of Jesus as God's speech act<sup>131</sup> and consider illocutionary acts  $F(p)$  in Scripture such as acts of blessing, promising, warning, exhorting, and so forth. These do not indicate biblical doctrines or moral principles in the propositional elements ( $p$ ) of the text, but rather point to specific ways of doing something as a dynamic application of the pattern of Christian life embedded in the authority or the divine force  $F(p)$  of the text. Such an approach could help to bridge the hermeneutic gap between human words in the biblical text and God's divine words. The reading and living out of Biblical ethics shapes the norms for Christian living in the present, given that the Holy Spirit inspired biblical authors to write the Bible and that their communicative acts express the intention of divine speech. It is also possible to account for the dynamic and powerful nature of biblical language as God's divine activity whereby the saving acts of the living God in Scripture relate to everyday Christian life across time and place.<sup>132</sup> Even though the context of Biblical narratives find their first identity in the past, their

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<sup>131</sup> There are various development theories and many different approaches to hermeneutic Christian ethics and the Bible. Seeing the research is primarily about Christian ethics from the perspective of SAT scope, an in-depth analysis of hermeneutic Christian ethics and the Bible is not discussed here. But this chapter is limited to considerations of Christian moral life in SAT. More precisely, my concern is to ethics, not to a direct approach to biblical hermeneutics as a whole. This study emerges in response to the question of how the Bible should be used and applied in Christian ethics in ordinary life. How the Word of God in the Bible works in the believers and believers' response to the Word of God in our lives as our Christian moral conduct. In order to find an answer to the questions, I suggest the concept of "divine speech act" which refers to God's performative action with God's particular purpose and it leads to the believers' response in accordance with the Word of God. It is both my point and at the same time a weakness in my argument. Since I used the Word of God in the Bible as a hermeneutical tool to support my idea about Christian ethics by using SAT (sometimes very partial just as example, as I could not deal with the whole) it is likely to be seen as a literalist or fundamentalist understanding of biblical ethics. At first glance, this seems inevitable in the methodology of SAT due to the fact that SAT is based mainly on the utterance of the speaker (or text), but it also implies social rules, customs and history including non-verbal conduct. However, my aim is not to suggest that my argument is a normative way or the only way to interpret God's intention for Christian life and not cover all other ethical approaches or even hermeneutics. Rather, it shows a certain possibility for the approach to Christian ethics as a methodology. This is an issue of methodology, not of material. To be specific, as Birch & Rasmussen (1976:46) pointed out, the Bible is of primary importance to Christian ethics, but not an absolute authority on contemporary moral problems. It means that the Bible alone is not a sufficient guide for Christian moral life, and it is necessary to include non-biblical sources of ethical insight such as cultural, social and historical worldviews. I also agree with that. However, because of the limitations of the methodology, non-biblical sources of ethical insight could not be adequately addressed here. "Christian ethics today would not find sound justification even for accepted biblical codes regarding slavery, treatment of women, or the set of crimes exacting capital punishment, to cite a few examples" (Birch & Rasmussen 1976:46).

<sup>132</sup> According to Vanhoozer (1994:144), biblical language participates in the Word of God since the Bible is identified as the Word of God. This shows that the doctrine of Scripture concerns the manner of God's involvement in the words of Scripture and thus the manner of God's activity in the world (Vanhoozer 1994:146).

illocutionary force, and communicative intention, are continuously being echoed through the language of the biblical text. This perspective is essential in explaining the important role of the Holy Spirit, as divine speech act, and the implications of this divine speech act in contemporary life.

Therefore, this chapter will consider how the application of SAT can help to develop the alternative linguistic epistemology which will consider the ethics of the kingdom of God<sup>133</sup> in the past as God's self (locution level), the present as Jesus' works (illocutionary level) and the future as the intention of the Holy Spirit (perlocutionary level). These three levels relate to three basic Christian ethical approaches which are virtue ethics (areteological theories), duty ethics (deontological theories), and consequence ethics (teleological theories).

## 4.2 Scripture as God's communicative act

Reymond (1998: XXV) notes that,

Systematic theology is that methodological study of the Bible that views the Holy Scripture as a *completed* revelation, in distinction from the disciplines of Old Testament theology, New Testament theology, and biblical theology, which approach the Scriptures as an *unfolding* revelation" (*his emphasis*).

Moreover, he notes that, "[t]he systematic theologian, viewing the Scriptures as a completed revelation, seeks to understand holistically the plan, purpose, and didactic intention of the divine mind revealed in Holy Scripture" (Reymond 1998: XXV). If this statement is accepted as valid, the Bible must count as God's revelation since we come to know God through the Bible. However, we should ask – how do the words of Scripture relate to the Word of God; and how does God relate the Bible to contemporary believers and to the world?

To answer these questions, we need to see *the Bible as a communicative act* from God (the one

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<sup>133</sup> This chapter developed and built upon the content of Chapter 3. Since this chapter shows how SAT functions as a methodology in relation to the theory presented in Chapter 3 it can help to develop our understanding of Christian ethics. Please note that some of the necessary methodological explanations from Chapter 3 are inevitably repeated in Chapter 4 to support the flow of the argument.



who reveals) to the people of God (readers, or recipients of revelation) in order to attain God's divine intention and God's kingdom through human language in the present world. In Calvin's (1958:83) words:

We have to do with the Word which came forth from God's mouth and was given to us...God's will is to speak to us by the mouths of the apostles and prophets...their mouths are to us as the mouth of the only true God... God's Word alone possesses the energy and efficacy to bestow upon us whatever is solid and eternal... Our lives have no stability expect in God, and expect as he communicates it to us by his Word.

On this matter, Warfield (1979:20) helpfully writes that:

The Bible is the Word of God in such sense that its words, though written by men bearing indelibly impressed on them the marks of their human origin, were written, nevertheless, under such an influence of the Holy Ghost as to be also the words of God, the adequate expression of His mind and will.

The above statements show that the Scriptures does not merely reveal God to the people of God, but that they also communicate a specific divine purpose to them in real-life situations. This means that God does not simply convey certain information about God's self to believers, but relates to humankind through the Scriptures in order to build a relationship with them and to fulfil God's will.<sup>134</sup> Similarly, God's being itself can be seen as a communicative act (divine discourse) because the Word of God creates and enacts the covenant of discourse with the people of God and the world as divine force.

In fact, discourse (conversation) is always an act of coming to something or someone. That is, what it is, what it is doing by what it is saying, which is closely linked to the act of being. Language is not self-referential. Rather, through its inherent intention, it becomes a message that is communicated in a certain situation or a specific community through the utterance of sounds to another person, which then leads to the process of interpretation out of which meaning comes. Language, as communication, discloses what (who) the speaker is, why the

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<sup>134</sup> Vanhoozer (2005:47-48) asserts that, "*Language is not simply a tool for information processing but a rich medium of communication action and personal interaction*. That God can use human language as a medium for his communicative action is no stranger than his employing the humanity of Jesus as a medium for revelation and reconciliation" (*his emphasis*).



speaker said something as well as what (who) the hearer is, and why the hearer reacted by doing something in relation to the conversation. “The something said” relates to a “something done” which presents who the speaker is, and what kind of person he/she is. It also invites one into a new reality of the world that emerges because of the words spoken at that particular time and place. Language can bring into being a world of reality through what has been written or spoken. From this perspective, the Word of God as a communicative act constitutes institutional facts which have divine force on the state of affairs within the confessing community, and that Word should govern patterns of behaviour in specific ways. In other words, Scripture written from spoken language presents God or God’s communicative act with God’s specific intention, not as a simple statement but as a new reality for our lives. Ricoeur (1973:97) correctly states in this regard that:

In spoken discourse... the subjective intention of the speaking subject and the meaning of the discourse overlap each other in such a way that it is the same thing to understand what the speaker means and what his discourse means... With written discourse, the author’s intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide. This dissociation of the verbal meaning of the text and the mental intention is what is at stake in the inscription of discourse... The tie between the speaker and the discourse is not abolished, but distended and complicated.

To link this to the argument at hand, God’s purpose in the biblical text affects the projected world under God’s divine speech in that it proposes a response from the people of God according to Word of God. Thus, the Bible as written discourse is seen as God’s communicative act which creates an inter-personal relationship between God and the people of God. According to Fiske (1990:2), communication (language) can be defined as “social interaction through messages” which means, it is “the process by which one person relates to others, or affects the behaviour, state of mind or emotional response of another.” In this sense, it contains both social interaction, that is, communication and interpersonal relations or communion.

Furthermore, this approach entails the idea that God is a participant in human discourse since God communicates with humans and shares God’s thought and intent (communion) with us. This means that God does not merely give us information through speech, but more importantly that God gives us God’s self in communion (Baillie 1956:47). Vanhoozer (1998:205) points out that, “The God of the Christian Scriptures is a God who relates to human beings largely

through verbal communication,” which shows “the word is God’s-being-in-communicative-action” (Vanhoozer 2002:162). The triune God’s divine engagement concerning the ethical dimensions of the presence of the kingdom can be understood in the human community based on the identification of certain linguistic characteristics. This approach encourages us to think of communication in terms of an intentional action. It is a Christian moral vision for the believing community.

From this perspective, the Bible and God’s self can be regarded as explicating the kingdom of God in verbal communication which could establish a covenant between God and God’s people in God’s kingdom. This is because, in general, the phrase the “kingdom of heaven” or the “kingdom of God” refers to God’s reign, as it points essentially and directly to God’s self (Jeremias 1971:9-14; Ladd 1974:64, 81; Kingsbury 1975:134; France 2007:271).<sup>135</sup>

According to Habermas (1984:305-307)<sup>136</sup>, there are three “validity conditions” for every speech act in terms of a covenant (social relationship) of discourse. These are: (1) the condition of the *truth* of the propositional content of the utterances; (2) the condition of the *rightness* of the speaker’s action in relation to a normative context; and (3) the condition of *sincerity or truthfulness*, of the expression of the speaker’s intentions that point to the inner, subjective experience. This infers that if the language of the speaker influences the hearer in the context of a covenant conversation, it must be *true, truthful* and *right* – it is a required “self-involving activity” with a certain responsibility. An “utterance of ‘I promise to do A’ will place him under

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<sup>135</sup> The main point of a Bible story is to show that God and God’s saving acts in human history have divine power (Ladd 1974:25-71; Vanhoozer, Bartholomew, Treier & Wright 2005:826). The kingdom is seen as a divine invasion and a divine incursion (Jones 1940:64; Henry 1992:42). As Ladd (1974:71) points out, the dynamic power of the kingdom has invaded the world, and human beings are to respond in a radical way. In this regard, the kingdom of God implies God’s sovereignty and it is closely linked to the salvation of God’s people. It is also expected to do something to God’s people in response to the Word of God since the kingdom is an expression of God’s self through the words of Jesus. Therefore, God’s word about the kingdom, is something that God says, something that God does, and something that God is.

<sup>136</sup> Habermas, a social theorist, developed the idea that an entire theory of rationality based on speech act theory is necessarily implied in everyday communication which refers to “communicative competence,” that is, something about implicit and intuitive knowledge that undergirds all successful communication as “validity conditions.” For further information on this issue, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

an obligation to do A” (Davis 1994:216). Searle (1969:58,60) maintains that the statements “‘I promise’ and ‘I hereby promise’ are among the strongest illocutionary forces indicating devices for *commitment* and also the essential feature of a promise is that it is the undertaking of an obligation to perform a certain act” (*his italics*). In other words, to say “I bless you” or “I promise you” is to perform a speech-act of implied behaviour or commitment that would be determined as real, or true, in the confessing community according to the words of Jesus. God’s communication implies not just the propositional theme in the Bible between God and believers but also the performance of the action in the force of what the Bible says, which brings about some response according to God’s particular purpose for the people of God. Therefore, the Bible (as pointing to the kingdom of God) contains illocutionary force as a part of God’s communicative act, and it can have perlocutionary effects on the believers.

#### **4.2.1 A communicative agent – “Who” and “What”**

The aim of Scripture and theology is to draw the people of God into a communicative act for the sake of communion with God and God’s creation (Vanhoozer 2005:35, 107-8). Vanhoozer (2010:24) argues that “Christian theology begins in the wake of God’s communicative activity or *theodrama* (*drao* = “I do”)<sup>137</sup> in which God’s speaking is a doing and God’s doing is more often than not a matter of speaking.” Scripture as God’s communicative agent often leads to action because speaking is a form of doing. Conversely, doing can also be a form of speaking (cf. Vanhoozer 2005:44). This demonstrates that theology involves both what God has said and done in Jesus Christ for the world, and what we must say and do in grateful response to God’s action in Jesus (Vanhoozer 2005:37-38, 46-48). In other words, Jesus’ sayings and actions present an expression of God’s being in terms of ontology. In relation to this divine communication, Jesus’ sayings and actions also tell us who we are and what we ought to do in response to the divine conversation; that is to say, “action becomes the self-manifestation of a being, both of its presence (its act of existence) and its mode of presence (its essence)” (Clarke 1994:8). That a being’s action that does something (i.e., it acts) implies its reason for existing.

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<sup>137</sup> For Vanhoozer (2010:222), “A ‘theodramatic’ metaphysics provides a systematic account of the categories needed to describe what God has said and done to renew all things in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.”

For example, before describing the context of a specific self-designation of God in the encounter between God and Moses in the burning bush at the calling of Moses in Exodus 3:1-15, we should distinguish between the “*who*” and the “*what*” in terms of being (“who am I?” and “what I am?”). This is because “*Identity concerns who God is; nature concerns what God is or what divinity is*” (Bauckham 2008:7, *my emphasis*).<sup>138</sup>

In Exodus 3:6, 15,<sup>139</sup> God identifies God’s self as the God of the patriarchs, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to Moses. This does not merely refer to the name or titles of God (as a form of propositional content), but rather to “who God is”. The statement expresses God’s identity in God’s illocutionary act, which at the same time contains what God has said and done in the history of Israel.<sup>140</sup> In other words, we know “who God is” as we identify God’s illocutionary force in our lives.<sup>141</sup> As the Exodus story shows, God is actively involved with divine force in the life of God’s people. God heard the voice of the suffering of the people of

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<sup>138</sup> I have used and developed Vanhoozer’s (2010:183-187) explanations of the divine identity to support my idea. The aim of the present section is to show a possible approach to showing the “who” and the “what” of the communicative agent by using one text as an illustration (Exodus 3:6, 15). The study is limited to considerations of the being of God in God-human conversation. Of course, there are several texts in the Bible (cf. Mt 8:27) that reveal God’s existence, but my interest is to explain God’s being and the agent of communication in the dialogue between God and humans. Thus, the scope of the study is limited to Exodus 3:6, 15, which is a specific text. I could not deal with the whole text or all other possible approaches. In addition, I try to explain the difference in the nuances of the words “who” and “what” in terms of ontology, not metaphysics. According to Vanhoozer (2010:183), “Metaphysics here designates the more systematic task of proving categories for understanding “what is” in general, while “ontology” refers to the more specific task of analysing the nature of particular types of being.” For more information about this, see Clarke, “The Discovery and Meaning of Being,” in *The One and Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001, 25-41); Vanhoozer, “*Remythologizing Theology*” (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 183-187).

<sup>139</sup> Many scholars agree that Exodus 3:6, 15 refers to the identity of God and the name of God respectively. Verse 6 shows God’s divine self-identification to Moses, “I am the God of your fathers” (Dozeman 2009:121) which means that who the true God is, as well as the history of divine relationships with the descendants of Abraham (Stuart 2006:115). In verse 15, the special name of God, Yahweh, is revealed. “This God who is present, this God who is, this Yahweh, is one and the same as the God of the fathers” (Durham 1987:39).

<sup>140</sup> The question of “who” is linked to personhood, Ricoeur (1992:16) says, “I shall give an interrogative form to this perspective, introducing by means of the question “who” all the assertions relating to the problematic of the self, and in this way giving the same scope to the question “who” and to the answer - the self. Four subcategories will therefore correspond to four manners of questioning: Who is speaking? Who is acting? Who is recounting about himself or herself? Who is the moral subject of imputation?”

<sup>141</sup> Warfield (1979:157) affirms that the Bible is the Word of God and God’s self is in control of human history: “When we give due place in our thoughts to the universality of the providential government of God, to the minuteness and completeness of its sway, and to its invariable efficacy, we may be inclined to ask what is needed beyond this mere providential government to secure the production of sacred books which should be in every detail absolutely accordant with the Divine will.”

Israel and initiated the exodus of the Israelites in order to redeem them physically and spiritually in order to save them. God also clothed and fed them in the wilderness for forty years. This demonstrates “who God is” or God’s identity through God’s speech and deeds, in that same manner as we may come to know or understand a person’s identity through their speech and deeds. God identifies God’s self through the narratives of the Scriptures. Thus it can be argued, that in most cases, one can tell a great deal about who a person is by observing what a person does in relation to the act of saying something. Thus, God’s identity is neither simply “*p*” nor simply “*F*” but “*F(p)*”, namely God’s illocutionary action.

In verse 12,<sup>142</sup> God made a promise to Moses as a communicative agent, saying, “I will be with you.” The nature of this promise as the primary content of the divine discourse rests on God’s identity. That is, God has divine authority, power and the ability which underlie such illocutions as promises or commitments to ensure that they would definitely happen as a result of God’s utterance and the covenant relationship that exists between God and Moses. The promise is performative language that is not just saying something, but is also an action which refers to the speaker’s identity. Such promises claim special status as speech-acts in the context of covenant (Thiselton 2006c:146). The promise contains specific conditions through which a speaker takes on certain responsibilities that relate to their message in order for it to be true for the hearer (Searle 1969:62). Therefore, God’s promise in divine speech shows “who God is” through the illocution in the divine force which demonstrates that God is a communicative agent in a covenantal relationship taking responsibility for what God does with Words for the people of God.

In the context of divine covenant, as reflected in the relationship between God and Moses, the promise of God produces this particular identity which also tell Moses “who he is” as well as

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<sup>142</sup> Stuart (2006:118) insists that, “God’s reply (v.12) contains two key elements: a promise of help and guidance (“I will be with you”) and a fulfilment sign. For God to “be with” someone means that he provides that person direct, special help and guidance that, in turn, can cause people to recognize that person’s worth and/or authority in given situations. A fulfilment sign is a confirmation that a prophet or leader has completed a key part of a task assigned him by God.

“what he ought to do” as one who is in covenant with God. God commanded Moses, who was an ordinary person, to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. Accordingly, Moses committed himself to future conduct according to his new status (as an ‘instructed’ person) and his responsibility as God’s prophet, and the leader of Israel. This came about by God’s illocutionary force which created a new reality (a new future) based on what God said to Moses. In other words, the illocutionary force creates the conditions for the perlocutionary act through the hearer’s response to the speaker’s promise which has the effect of persuading the hearer to act in response to the promise. That is to say, God’s illocutionary force created a perlocutionary effect on Moses, producing an appropriate response such as trust or obedience in the Word of God. This illustration enables us also to ask what it means to be human (ontologically) and to know that who we are precedes what we ought to do before God? Hence, we could argue that the Scriptures as communicating God’s Word requires that we submit to its authority for ethical living (Edwards & Stott 1988:104).

What, then, is the difference between “who” and “what”? We can find the key to this question in verses 11 and 13. God called Moses to bring the people of God, the Israelites, out of Egypt. However, Moses asked God, “*Who am I* that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” (v.11). The answer to the question “who am I” points to Moses’ identity and could signify that the author is suggesting that Moses had no status, and no authority or power to bring the Israelites out of Egypt as expected in relation to the illocution in the divine communication. Thus, God promises Moses, “I will be with you” (v.12); but Moses again asks God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘*What is his name?*’ what shall I say to them?” (v.13). The crucial point here is that Moses wanted to introduce God (i.e., the God of the Israelites’ ancestors) to the Israelites. Yet they already knew God as the God of the patriarchs, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. However, Moses was concerned about God’s name and how to introduce God to the Israelites when they asked him, “what is his name?” The question, “*what is his name?*” is a question of identity, i.e., “*what* God is his name” namely *what is God’s nature?* The answer is, “*God is one*”, it points to a propositional notion, i.e., *monotheism*, rather than God’s illocutionary force which would show what God has already done through what God has said. The question, “What is his name?” means “Is it really the true God since we that there is only

one God?”<sup>143</sup> Perhaps, it is a matter of *what God is*, that is, the nature of God, since the Israelites believed in the oneness of God. Thus, God said to Moses, “I am who I am” (v.14) which underlines that God is, “The God of the patriarchs, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (v.15) as God’s name forever in God’s illocutionary force. In other words, God spoke through God’s illocutionary action, that is, what God has said and done in the history of Israel. This is not a propositional statement, as in “God is one”, but rather a “language-event” in the form of “performative utterances” which focus on the force of language that is used to accomplish God’s intent and enact the covenant with the people of God. Therefore, the Scriptures can be seen as a communicative agent that displays God’s illocutionary action in order to communicate with the people of God and share God’s thoughts with them for the sake of achieving God’s will.

#### 4.2.2 God as a doer and communicative agent

The Bible portrays God as a communicative agent. It demonstrates that God relates to the people of God through language which serves to establish a covenant between God and believers regarding God’s kingdom and God’s purpose for them and the world. Such communicative acts of God represent what God does when speaking to God’s people in

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<sup>143</sup> Stuart (2006:119-120) argues that, “Moses’ protest at this point is appropriate for someone willing to respond favorably to a call of God, particularly in light of the culture he and his fellow Israelites lived in. Theirs was a polytheistic, pantheistic, and syncretistic world in which all people groups and nations – there are no known exceptions – believed that there were many gods, that all nature partook to some degree of divinity, and that all religions had at least some validity no matter how many or what sort of gods or goddesses those religions worshiped and regardless of the contradictions a modern person can immediately see between any two such religions. *Moses therefore wondered which God am I speaking to?* since “the God of your fathers” (a summation of v.6) might have different meanings to different Israelites. Having lived in the midst of pagan cultures all their lives, all Israelites were at risk for heterodox beliefs and/or the distortion of whatever correct beliefs they may theoretically have inherited. Moreover, since the true God was known by various names and titles in the patriarchal era (e.g., *El Elyon*, “God Most High” in Gen 14:18-22; *Pahad Yitshaq*, “Fear of Isaac” in Gen 31:42, 53; *El Shaddai*, “God Almighty” in Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; *El Roi*, “The God Who Sees Me” in Gen 16:13; *El Bethel*, “God of Bethel” in Gen 31:13) specificity was desirable. Perhaps most importantly, however, was the assumption in that culture that to call on a good – that is, to pray to and worship him – involved calling on his name, specifically naming him in prayer and worship (cf. 1 Kgs 18:24-26)” (*my emphasis*). For more information about the ancient myth-making religious mind in terms of polytheism, pantheism, and syncretism, see H. Frankfort, *Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (New York: Penguin, 1967).



language such as warning  $W(p)$ , promise  $Pr(p)$ , blessing  $B(p)$ , command  $C(p)$ , informing  $I(p)$ , and so on (cf. Searle 1969:31). At the same time, the believers respond to God's utterance as illocutionary acts, in relation to what has been said, such as obedience or trust, which is represented as Christian communal conviction, confession or creed in the confessing community. This perspective shows that "the Spirit convicts us that the Bible contains God's illocutions and enables us to respond to them as we ought" (Vanhoozer 1997:156). In other words, the Scriptures as a communicative agent, is itself "a rule-governed form of behaviour," for it contains certain "constitutive rules" such as the value systems of righteousness, which have meaning in Christianity's social context.

Unlike "regulative rules" that state "Do X", or "If Y do X", "constitutive rules" create new forms of behaviour which govern human behaviour as having a certain form, "X counts as Y in context C" (Searle 1969:33-35). To return to our previous example, the statement, "Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Mt 25:13) can be expressed as "*A believer counts as a watchful person in the context of the kingdom if they respond to exhortation.*" Similarly, the first Beatitude can be expressed as "*the poor in spirit counts as having the kingdom of heaven in the context of the promises of God's blessing.*" These utterances perform a speech act of implied behaviour or commitment that is determined by the speech act. They refer to who we are, what we ought to do, or how we ought to live every day in accordance with the Word of God. They define the pattern of the Christian life based on the living voice of God as God's illocutionary divine force. To put it differently, the illocutionary act of God (God's communicative act) as  $F(p)$  in the Bible and its force are continuously being echoed in the present world. As God reveals God's self in self-communication through the Scriptures a bridge is built between the world of the Bible and the contemporary world. This is a new reality or world that emerges through illocutionary force. That is to say, God is a *communicative agent* by means of illocutionary force in what God says about the Christian life.

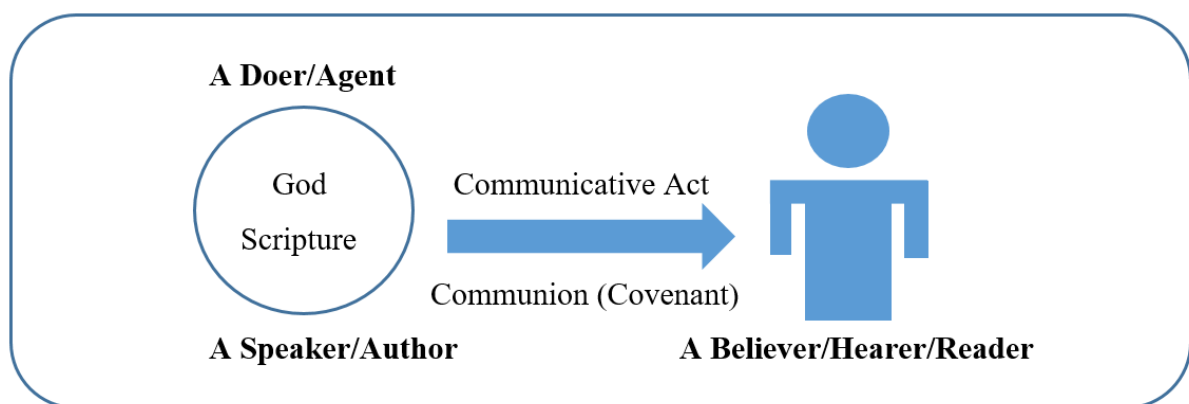
In fact, the point stated above is closely linked to what God is doing when saying something, and what effect the act of saying something has on the believers. Implied also in the relationship between the meaning of *what God says* and *the force of what God says* (cf. Austin 1975:108)



is the idea that *God is a communicative agent* because God supplies the force in what is said. This relates God's role and the responsibility to God's people in order to achieve God's divine purpose. Evans (1963:35-37) affirms that:

It is probably true that most human language concerning God is *Behabitive* or *Commissive*; but this does not automatically eliminate the relevance of facts-factual presuppositions, and sometimes, factual content... For *Commissives* and *Exercitives* are no way of referring to what is the case, but are used to 'create' something: undertaking (for example, by a promise) or an institutional relation (for example, by a decree) (*his emphasis*).

Consequently, God as a communicative agent activates something and causes certain effects in the lives of believers as a response to God's communication. Christian life (ethics) is based on the Word of God as the promise or the command of God to the confessing community, which is applied for the sake of the kingdom of God as well as to attain God's intention in contemporary life. Thus, God (speaker/Scripture) is an *active agent* with illocutionary force in what God is saying about the Christian life. The definition of Scripture as God's communicative act in terms of action and the doer of the action (i.e., the agent) in SAT can be illustrated with the diagram below:



Diagram\_4: God's communicative act

#### 4.2.3 The presence of the Kingdom in the past, present and future as God's communicative act and its moral reflection according to SAT

Scripture presents God as a speaker or doer in terms of God's communicative act. This entails the idea that God is a divine participant with authority in human discourse who sets to attain God's purpose and kingdom in the people of God in the present world. Vanhoozer (2005:124)

argues that, “divine authority ultimately belongs to God’s alone... The canon is the locus for God’s communicative action<sup>144</sup> – past, present, and future – the divinely approved means by which God exercises his authority.” Thus, God’s will (the presence of the kingdom) can be seen as God’s communicative action, and to an extent, it can be understood through inherent linguistic characteristics in which the use of words are able to express God’s divine intention (meaning) to the people of God (application/praxis). Such a view encourages us to think of communication in terms of intentional action.

How then do we explain the presence of the kingdom as divine intention and authority in the tension between the past, the present and the future in the kingdom and its moral effects (Christian life) through language? If Jesus, (the Word who was made flesh, according to John 1:14) is the same yesterday, today, and forever as stated in Hebrews 13:8, the influence of the Jesus would be the same in time and space. If this is so, is it reasonable to locate the kingdom in the past, the present and the future, and to probe its impact on the believer.

Thus, we could regard the presence of the kingdom as part of God’s total speech act and as a

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<sup>144</sup> Vanhoozer has been devoted to critiquing and responding to postmodern philosophies which are openly antagonistic to Western forms of linguistic realism such as Deconstructionism, Reader-Response theories, and Postliberalism. He points out that there is disagreement among evangelicals about the precise ways that Scripture serves as both propositional truth and communicative revelation. In his book, “Is There a Meaning in This Text?”, Vanhoozer (1998:456) argues that according to the Reformed tradition, the ontological basis for the capacity of communicative action is the nature of God. This means that biblical language can be understood as a covenantal medium of interpersonal communication between God and the people of God (p.207). To explain the point more clearly, Vanhoozer draws upon three philosophical views in terms of a comprehensive theory of literary meaning as communicative action: Searle’s speech act theory; Ricouer’s hermeneutics; and Habermas’ social theory. In line with Searle’s speech act theory, Vanhoozer affirms that the task of interpretation is to recover and discover the necessity of the author’s intent or intended meaning through the illocutionary force in the text. Although he disagrees with Ricouer in many ways, Vanhoozer finds value in Ricouer’s idea that a text can be seen as a meaningful action: “If the text is meaningful action, and if the meaning of an action depends on the intention of its agent, it follows that the meaning of a text as act depends on its author’s intention” (pp.216-217). Following Habermas, Vanhoozer upholds the idea that “language is primarily a means for coordinating human action” (p.218). Thus, “Language is a medium of communication that serves understanding”, “not to separate speech acts from the context of their utterance or from their speaker” (pp.217-218). In this perspective, the Bible can be regarded as God’s communicative action and the author as a communicative agent: “To inquire into what the text means is to ask what the author has done in, with, and through the text. *The goal of understanding is to grasp what has been done, together with its effects; the possibility of attaining such understanding is the presupposition of communicative action*” (p.218, *his emphasis*).

divine force which includes the meaning of what God said (locutionary act), the force of what God said (illocutionary act), and the response to saying something (perlocutionary act). It refers to the essence of the kingdom in linguistic terms. The presence of God is not confined merely to our current context, but rather God's presence goes beyond time and place (the past, present, and future), just like the Trinitarian God (Dalferth 2006:83-85). The Trinitarian God works in the past, present, and future for the kingdom in human history. Throughout history, Christians encounter the saving acts of the living triune God in their lives. We can know who we are, how to live and what we ought to do in the present. God's self continues to address people today through Scripture which shares God's thoughts (purpose) for the sake of the kingdom of God. Moreover, God reveals God's self through Jesus Christ to those illuminated by the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit works with divine force and power in believers. This is because God's very being can be seen as a self-communicative act that both constitutes and enacts the covenant of engagement between God and believers. It indicates that language is as a covenantal medium of interpersonal communication; the speaker (God), the Word (Jesus), and the reception (Spirit) are all interrelated (Vanhoozer 1998:456). Vanhoozer (1998:457) confirms that:

God is a speaking God. The Father is the one who, in the words of the creeds, *est locutus per prophetas*. Most of what God does—creating, warning, commanding, promising, forgiving, informing, comforting, etc. — is accomplished by speech acts. Moreover, God's speech agency is the epitome of clarity and efficacy. Speech act theory serves as handmaiden to a trinitarian theology of communication. *If the Father is the locutor, the Son is his preeminent illocution, Christ is God's definitive Word, the substantive content of his message. And the Holy Spirit — the condition and power of receiving the sender's message is — God the perlocutor*, the reson that his words do not return to him empty (Isa. 55:11). The triune God is therefore the epitome of communicative agency: the speech agent who utters, embodies, and keeps his Word (*my emphasis*).

The above statement presents “a three-dimensional communicative action, with form and matter (propositional content), energy and trajectory (illocutionary force), and teleology or final purpose (perlocutionary effect)” (Vanhoozer 1998:218). In other words,

God thus makes himself known as a triune communicative agent, and what he communicates is not merely information (truth) but energy (life) and purpose (the way) — in a word, himself: the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. The Bible is a product of God's triune communicative work and that not only transmits information but also, and more importantly, conveys life (Vanhoozer 2010:24).

Accordingly, from a SAT perspective, the presence of the kingdom can be seen from a threefold level of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in terms of the essence of the totality of the kingdom of God in the past (locution level), the present (illocutionary level) and the future (perlocutionary level).

Firstly, the kingdom of God in the past can be regarded as the locution level. The locutionary act is the performance of an act of saying something, which presents itself at the level of saying something as a propositional element describing some state of affairs or informative facts as true or false. This refers to the content of what has been said or written in relation to the *past*. For example, the creation account (Gen 1:1-2:25) as a past event is written in a narrative form with the command, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen 1:28). In the context of the creation event, God (*locutor*) acts as the agent of causal power. This power refers to events and divine authority as propositional elements because the causal force, which is the result of an utterance, is not part of the utterance’s meaning and intention (Evans 1963:70-74). In other words, *the kingdom of God in the past shows that God has spoken to the people of God by God’s son* (Heb 1:1-2). It is closely linked to God the Father’s locution (Vanhoozer 1997:156). Accordingly, the utterance, the propositional dimension, contains the informative fact as true or false; it is to be communicated between God and the believer for God’s kingdom and will. Therefore, the locutionary act of the kingdom points to the propositional elements and the propositional meaning in what God said or what the Bible (text) meant.

Secondly, the kingdom of God in the present can be seen as the illocutionary level. The illocutionary act is what we do in saying something through the inherent linguistic force as opposed to the locutionary act. It recognizes the true meaning of the text or utterance. Meaning is obtained not just through words and the utterance of sounds but rather by doing something as an “act” in the human community. In the case of the biblical text, it implies what the text meant and also what the text would do to the hearer. It functions as the power of what we do when we utter words which pertain to our current situation and which can only take place within a conventional rule. The illocutionary act relates to what one does in saying something

in accordance with the speaker's specific intent to promise, warn or exhort the hearer to act in a certain way. In this sense, *the kingdom of God in the present demonstrates the force of what Jesus says according by illocutionary actions to the believer in ordinary life*. Even though Jesus is no longer bodily on the earth, his utterance was/is performed as an illocutionary action of a message of promise or warning to the audience in a past event in the biblical world, as well as to the contemporary hearer (reader). It shows that the utterance of Jesus is a past event but its illocutionary force and its intention are continuously being echoed as a reality in the present world, and it is up to the reader (hearer) to respond to the words of Jesus. This is what makes communication count as a certain kind of action which can create a new reality in a community. The illocutionary force of the utterances of Jesus are a self-involving activity because they already contain the commitment to do something with the implication of intention, action, and attitude between God and the people of God in a particular context. It produces a certain intended effect on the believer in the context of the kingdom of God. Searle (1971:39) explains that, "The production of the sentence token under certain conditions is the illocutionary act, and the illocutionary act is the minimal unit of linguistic communication."

The Bible shows that God testifies of Christ in various ways (Vanhoozer 1997:156). This testimony has illocutionary force, as it continues to play across time and place (Pratt 1977:136). This characteristic of the illocution portrays the kingdom in the present as having divine force in contemporary life and is related to Jesus' works through a particular intent or force which shows that a proposition (the word of God as the kingdom in the past) is to be taken (cf. Vanhoozer 1994:177). It is neither simply "*p*" nor simply "*F*" but "*F(p)*" which demonstrates that the expressions of the propositions in the context of the kingdom (the kingdom in the past as the Word of God) become an action (the kingdom in the present as the force of what we do with the Word of God) through the illocutionary force. It is expected to produce meaningful deeds in a hearer according to God's intent (illocutionary point). For example, in 1 Corinthians 1: 23, the statement, "We preach (*F*) Christ crucified (*p*)," can be interpreted as "Jesus is Lord" *F(p)* (1 Cor 12:3) which contains self-involving activity; it adopts a stance towards the state of affairs according to the speech act (cf. Thiselton 2006a:86). This is discussed in detail in section 3.3.1.

Additionally, the statement, “Jesus is my Lord”  $F(p)$ , entails the self-description, “*I am a Christian*”  $F(p)$ , because Christians who see themselves as Christ’s servants are wholly at the disposal of their “Lord,” having an obligation to God and God’s kingdom in accordance with the Word of God in everyday life. In other words, the speaker who preaches Christ crucified  $F(p)$  is also involved in the confessing community as one with new status and responsibility as a Christian in the midst of contemporary daily life. This means that the illocutionary action, as a self-involving act, invites trust, devotion and obedience to the Word of God. Specifically, it indicates that in saying, “We preach (F) Christ crucified (p),” one commits to any future conduct since it supposes that one has a particular attitude and intention according to the illocutionary action in the utterance. It implies that *the kingdom in the present refers to the force of what we do in accordance with God’s purpose which creates meaning or meaningful action from the utterance of a statement*. Therefore, the intent of God in the speech act concerned is communicated in the form of an intentional act as the kingdom in the present under the illocutionary act.

Furthermore, illocutionary force in the biblical text can be seen based on the understanding of pneumatological epistemology, which assumes that God speaks by doing things in and through the Bible as God’s illocutionary action. This is a testimony of what God is already doing for us in Jesus Christ. It means that a biblical pneumatological epistemology can be used to explain the kingdom of God in the present through illocutionary force which does not simply refer to what the Bible (Trinity God) is about, but also to the value of actually performing it for the people of God and the world in the utterances of God. In other words, in the Bible, illocutionary action produces the meaning of the text according to the illocutionary point (purpose) for the believer, who constitutes the person of faith with specific ethical conduct in a believing community. Accordingly, God’s illocutionary act reveals God’s self through what Jesus says and does for those illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, *the kingdom of God in the present demonstrates God’s being (Jesus) and identity in accordance with the work of the Holy Spirit which creates the confession in the believing community. It leads to moral responses at the same time thorough the illocutionary act*.

Thirdly, the kingdom of God in the future can be represented at the perlocutionary level. The perlocutionary act is “what we bring about or achieve by saying something.” It produces the intended effect of what has been said. Austin (1975:101) states that, “Saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons”. An act of speech which is performed in this way is termed a perlocutionary act. It responds to the speaker’s statement according to the illocutionary act as the obtained effect of what has been said on the hearer. The perlocutionary act produces an effect on the hearer, which is achieved through an illocutionary act. The illocutionary force creates an appropriate response in the receiver. This idea of perlocution can be used to express *the kingdom in the future as what happens as a result of speaking* (the kingdom in the future as the response or effect of the sayings of God) *to persuade, caution, or warn the believer; and it corresponds to the Holy Spirit’s response as God’s perlocution* (cf. Vanhoozer 1997:156). For example, when Jesus says, “Listen!” and “Let anyone who has ears, listen!” (Mt 13: 18, Mk 4: 9, Lk 8: 8), Jesus does not just command the people to “listen”.<sup>145</sup> He is not simply asking them to hear him, but rather he is trying to warn errant believers, who do not follow God’s will or obey him with a sincere heart and true understanding of the Word of God, by urging or persuading them to obey the Word (Snodgrass 2013:286). When the hearers hear the sayings of Jesus Christ, if they change from disobedience to obedience (Christian life) to God by following the words of Jesus, then, it is as a result of the perlocutionary act which refers to the condition and power of receiving Jesus’s words. It is God the Holy Spirit, as an expression of God’s illocutionary act, that is the self-involving activity. The Christian life, in terms of moral conduct, reflects the Christian confession, “Jesus is my Lord”, *F(p) through the work of the Holy Spirit as God’s perlocution*. This confession pertains to the illocutionary effect or response in the utterance which creates the perlocutionary effect as well as the perlocutionary action in the believer as a “*perlocutionary ethical response*” (PER), “the norm of Christian life” or “Christian ethics”. It means that the perlocutionary action, which is the process of inferring the intended outcome of a sequence of divine illocutionary acts in the work of the Holy Spirit due to God’s illocution action, causes a change towards

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<sup>145</sup> Gerhardsson (1968:165-193) argues that the command, “Listen!” (*akouete*) echoes the *Shema* “Hear, O Israel” in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. This implies that the command to hear, and therefore to obey, which in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 requires hearers to love God with heart and soul and strength, calls for wholehearted response to Jesus in the New Testament (Hooker 2000:89).



God's will in the attitudes and minds of the believers (i.e., the hearers). Therefore, *the kingdom in the future as a perlocutionary act responds to the intended effect of what has been said* as the work of the Holy Spirit. It has to do with response of the believers.

Since the Bible reveals God's self, and presents God's kingdom, the Word of God is the result of God's self-communicative action with God's people. It shows God's being in a speech act which is not simply speaking a language but engaging in a performative action which is expressed as the kingdom in the past, the present and the future.

To sum up, from the perspective of SAT, the abovementioned threefold character of the kingdom can be reasonably correlated to locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts in the biblical text. It can also be connected with the doctrine of the Trinity and how it relates to our lives through divine force in the verbal communication between God and God's people.<sup>146</sup> The locutionary act of the kingdom refers to what God communicates while the illocutionary act of the kingdom has content (as reference and predication which indicate the non-illocutionary parts of the statement) and a certain intention (cf. Searle 1969:31-32). The illocutionary act is able to produce an effect on the Christian in accordance with the words of God, but the perlocutionary act of the kingdom is the effect of an illocutionary act on the actions of the believer. For example, when Jesus said, "Listen" (Mt 13: 18, Mk 4: 9, Lk 8: 8), he was issuing a *warning* (illocution) to *persuade* the believer (perlocution). This clearly shows that the work of the Holy Spirit through the Bible, as an expression of God's communicative words, affects the lives of Christians in specific ways.

In other words, Jesus's intentional act becomes a significant guide for patterning the Christian life, that is, for the PER, Christian ethics. In SAT, the sayings of Jesus would be considered an

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<sup>146</sup> For a detailed, and very helpful discussion, of the relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity, Biblical revelation, and God's divine force in human life please see Migliore, Daniel L. (2008). *The Power of God and the gods of Power*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, and Migliore, Daniel L. (2004). *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Second Edition. Grand Rapid, Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company.



illocutionary act and part of the total speech act, which may have a perlocutionary effect. These sayings remain valid (in the sense of communication of intention) and have a unique illocutionary act and perlocutionary response. They also require us, as believers with responsibilities, to do something in response to the saying. This performative aspect of language (in relation to the kingdom) refers to the mystery of divine action, which reveals the content of God's Word in Christian lives. Migliore (2004: 21) says:

Scripture is filled with accounts of the revelation of God breaking into human life as a surprising gift and unsettling commission. Moses hears the voice of God from a burning bush instructing him to lead the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt (Exod. 3); David becomes aware of the sin he has committed when Nathan tells him the story of a rich man who robs and kills a poor man's only lamb (2 Sam.12); Isaiah has a vision in which God summons him to service (Isa.6:1-8); Paul experiences a revelation of Jesus Christ that changes him from a persecutor of the church to an apostle of the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal. 1: 12); Peter has a dream that teaches him that God shows no partiality and intends the gospel message to be preached to Gentiles as well as Jews (Acts 10:0ff.). Revelation is the disclosure of the character and purpose of God, and when it is received, it radically changes the lives of its recipients.

In this sense, Jesus' proclamation of the presence of the kingdom opens a new reality within us, as a pattern for Christian living. Therefore, *Christian ethical theories should pay attention to the illocutionary force according to its perlocutionary effect in order to fulfil God's will and God's kingdom.* A description of the presence of the kingdom in the past, present and future in terms of God's communicative act in SAT can be described in the following diagram:

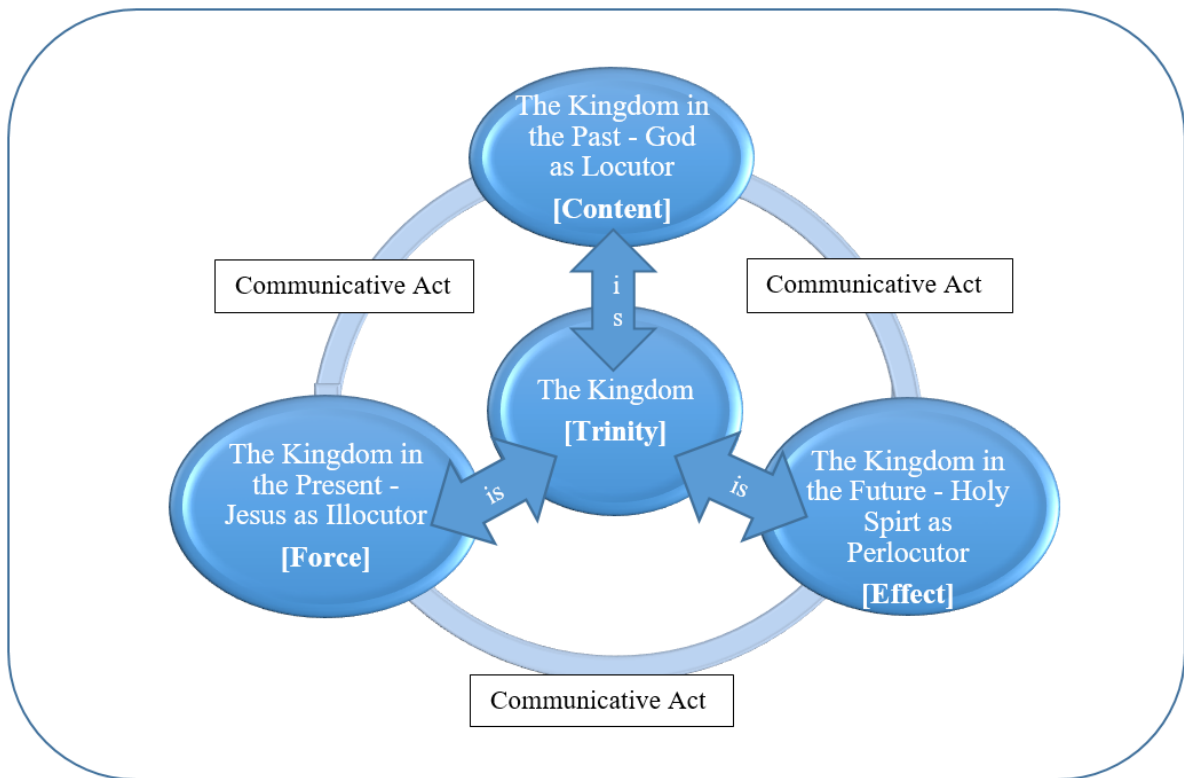


Diagram 5: The presence of the kingdom in terms of God's communicative act

#### 4.3 The presence of the Kingdom as Messianic Illocutionary Force (MIF) and its Ethical implications approach according to SAT

Why does God engage in communicative acts with people? It is because of God's redemptive intention for humankind (2004:86, 418).<sup>147</sup> The kingdom has to do with the divine work of salvation in Jesus Christ (Ridderbos 1962:354; Hunsberger 2015:62-63), and Jesus is the saviour who makes God's sovereignty and kingdom a reality (Brunner 1962:365-366; Snyder 1991:147-149). Furthermore, the kingdom is the redemptive reign of God as *messianic salvation* and it is realized in human history in terms of the blessings of God's sovereignty (Elwell 2001:658, Weber 1989:56-64). Ladd's (1974:72, 91) remark in this regard is

<sup>147</sup> The presence of the kingdom (the words of God) refers to God's self, and it is clearly linked to God's intent (force) which shows God's redemptive work through the messianic language in the Bible; that is, it shows why God reveals himself to God's people and the purpose of the kingdom of God.

noteworthy:

When we ask about the content of this new realm of blessing, we discover that *basileia* means not only the dynamic reign of God and the realm of salvation; it is also used to designate the gift of life and salvation. Here is another original element in Jesus' teaching. The kingdom of God stands as a comprehensive term for all that the *messianic salvation* included... our central thesis is that the kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish his rule among men [*sic*], and that this kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver men [*sic*] from its power, and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign (*my emphasis*).

Thus, the purpose of the kingdom of God is the salvation of God's people (and all of creation), and *the utterances of Jesus can be understood as messianic language which counts as illocutionary force in SAT – we shall term this as messianic illocutionary force – MIF<sup>148</sup> for Jesus' messianic acts*. This means that messianic language can be regarded as a speech act and a "Christological" act because the power of words shows the character of the speaking agent. For example, in the statement, "Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Mt 25:13), the typical Christological language  $F(p)$ , "Jesus' time"  $Pr(p)$ <sup>149</sup> contains the propositional facts ( $p$ ) that "Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God, Lord, and the ultimate judge." It calls upon the hearers' accountability (PER: *perlocutionary ethical response*) as a response to the words of Jesus. For example, they are expected to act in obedience or trust in practical ways through the MIF and its point. Specifically, the communication of the messianic language of warning (keep awake) may be seen as the propositional content in the text, and its illocutionary act in relation to the notion of the judgement on the Last Day (and of eschatology), which have power to do something in the hearer according to the inherent language force and its communicative intention. The word of warning about the judgement on the Last Day has implications for the kingdom of God. It expects ethical action from the believers in their current lives. In other words, the propositional meaning of the kingdom becomes a reality as in relation to the presence of the kingdom in the present by the inherent language force according to the specific communicative intent of God. Thus, salvation can be related to MIF.

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<sup>148</sup> I have borrowed this term from Duck-Hyun Kim's PhD Dissertation to support my argument. See Duck-Hyun Kim's PhD Thesis, *"The Homiletical Appropriation of Biblical Passages in the Light of Speech Act Theory: Preaching as a Performance of the Biblical Text"* (Stellenbosch University Ph. D Thesis, 2014:102).

<sup>149</sup> The proposition of Jesus' time (the day and the hour) can be counted as a promise and promissory illocutionary force  $Pr(p)$  in the context of the kingdom of God.

In fact, Jesus' messianic intention leads to the illocutionary act and the illocutionary act in Jesus' sayings about His kingdom can be ascribed to his identity and actions. For example, the interpreter of the statement, "Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Mt 25:13), should regard the total speech act as a divine messianic force which includes *the meaning of what Jesus said* (locutionary act), *the force of what Jesus said* (illocutionary act), and *the response of saying something* (perlocutionary act). It refers to the identity of Jesus as the bridegroom of his people (cf. France 2000:181). This perspective would help us to recognize the divine illocutionary force in the sayings of Jesus according to His messianic purpose under God's sovereignty. Thus, as messianic language, Jesus' sayings have illocutionary force to work towards the purposes of salvation. The sayings of Jesus are a past event, but their illocutionary force or energy, and their intention, are continuously being echoed in the present world in relation to their momentum.<sup>150</sup> The identity of Jesus should "govern interpretation of conventional 'messianic' language, rather than that ready-made assumptions about the meaning of such language should govern an understanding of Jesus" (Thiselton 2006a:80).

From the perspective of SAT, we can understand the nature of God as revealed in the Bible through the divine illocutionary force. The perspective enables us also to ask what it means to be human and to know that who we are in Jesus Christ precedes what we ought to do before God. According to Barr (1973:121), it is important to understand "a communication or revelation from God which is antecedent to the human tradition about him and which then goes on to generate that very tradition." The illocutionary force in the sayings of Jesus creates their intended perlocutionary effect in the believing community as a response to the words of Jesus. In this way, we can highlight the point of Jesus' intention in the appropriation of Christian ethics, as the intent of the illocutionary force in Jesus' sayings (or teaching) about the Christian life and the kingdom of God. The intent is to engage with the believers and the confessing community towards a way of living that participates in the establishment of the kingdom of

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<sup>150</sup> The Scripture states that, "The Word of God is living and active" (Heb 4:12); and "So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isa 55:11).

God.

The force of an illocutionary action as messianic language in the sayings of Jesus are closely linked to the promise or command from God to God's people to fulfil the kingdom which is often represented eschatologically.<sup>151</sup> The character of the language shows that promissory language (future oriented) transforms current reality:

Some illocutions have part of their purpose or point, to “get the words” (more strictly, their propositional content) to match the world. This is the case with assertions. But others have the inverse function: “to get the world to match the words”. This is the case with promise and commands (Thiselton 1992:294).

Illocutionary force still influences believers today (perlocutionary effect), as it matches the world to the words in terms of the messianic intention as promissory language. Such sayings concretise the identity of Christians in accordance with the illocutionary force in Jesus' teaching which is represented as a Christian communal conviction, confession or creed, and which is based on Jesus' messianic intention in specific ways.<sup>152</sup> The illocutionary force demonstrates who we are in the Christian community as well as who God is as we identify God's illocutionary force in human history. All ethical reflection occurs relative to a specific time and place. Moreover, the very nature and structure of ethics is determined by the particularities of a community's history and convictions (Hauerwas 1983:1). Therefore, it is important to show how the illocutionary force influences Christian life according to its perlocutionary effect, but it also how it transforms situations to fit the eschatological promise,

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<sup>151</sup> Thiselton (2007:545) argues that eschatology underlines the divine promise which God fulfils through God's own sovereign choice.

<sup>152</sup> In the light of SAT, these perspectives depend on constitutive rules, which enable us to create or define new forms of behaviour which often have the form “X counts as Y” or “X counts as Y in context C” (Searle 1969:33-35). For example, under the constitutive rules of soccer, when the soccer player kicks a soccer ball into the goal, it counts as one goal. There are conventions involved in these constitutive rules, which relate to all kinds of non-linguistic criteria. Therefore, to perform an illocutionary act is to engage in “a rule-governed form of behaviour” (Searle 1979:17). In the Bible, for instance, in Acts 2:21 can be expressed as “*One who is calling the name of the Lord is counted as having salvation in the circumstance of the promises of God*” and Matthew 25:13 can be expressed as “*A believer counts as a watchful person in the context of the kingdom of exhortation.*” This focus reflects on the confession of certain communities which produces a particular identity as to who God is as we identify God's illocutionary force in human history. That is to say, the concept of promise or exhortation provides the broader role of institutional facts that serve as a foundation for valid illocutionary acts in order to fulfil God's kingdom. Therefore, the message of the kingdom in Jesus is itself *a rule-governed form of behaviour in Christianity's social context.*

that is, the divine MIF according to its perlocutionary effect.

#### 4.3.1 The Christian moral life in relation to the message of the Kingdom in biblical narratives in terms of the Messianic Illocutionary Force (MIF)

Many biblical narratives present Jesus as the Messiah, Son of God, and Lord, through the illocutionary force in the text or the teaching of Jesus. The illocutionary force creates a particular pattern of behaviour in the faith community through the intended perlocutionary effect of the illocutionary action. It shows clearly that the stories of Jesus having divine force constitutes Christian moral life by following what Jesus intends for the hearer to do in response to the utterance. The utterance of Jesus' messianic purpose, MIF, can therefore be characterized in the form of a promise  $Pr(p)$ , warning  $W(p)$ , or blessing  $B(p)$ , since it already contains an intended action and response from the hearer of the utterance in the context of the kingdom of God (cf. Searle 1969:31). In other words, the MIF in biblical narratives can be represented as " $F(p)$ ", namely *what Jesus really intended to do in saying "F"*, and *what Jesus said, "p"*. It is neither simply " $p$ " nor simply " $F$ " but " $F(p)$ " which demonstrates that the expression of a proposition " $p$ " becomes a specific action " $F(p)$ " through the illocutionary force. In addition, it anticipates meaningful deeds from the hearer in response the utterance of the speaker. The MIF in biblical narratives plainly proposes that the PER is the norm of the Christian life according to the words of Jesus. It can create a form of Christian ethics: *Hear and obey the words of Jesus (God) in trust, devotion, and obedience based on the confession that "Jesus is the Messiah, my Lord" in the public domain*. The story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman as narrative plot in John 4:1-42, is a good example of the relationship between the illocutionary action " $F(p)$ " and the intended perlocutionary effect (PER) on the Christian life mentioned above:

Samaritan woman: (situation: by the well) "I know that the Messiah is coming" (v.25)

"Οἶδα ὅτι Μεσσίας ἔρχεται"

Jesus: "I am he, the one who is speaking to you" (v.26)

"Εγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι"

Narrator: Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people. (v.28)

Samaritan woman: "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! Is not he

the Christ, is he?” (v.29)<sup>153</sup>

“Δεῦτε ἴδετε ἄνθρωπον ὃς εἶπέ μοι πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα· μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστός”

Village: “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world” (v.42)

“αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκηκόαμεν, καὶ οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου”

Before listening to Jesus’ statement, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you”, the woman did not know that he is the Messiah. This shows that the illocutionary force in the saying of Jesus contains both the propositional content *p*, “I who speak to you am he” and an assertive action *F(p)*, “I am the Messiah” which intends to do something that would make the woman recognize him as the Messiah, believe in him, and become a follower of his way (perlocutionary action). In other words, Jesus intended to express a communicative action. Jesus’ utterance, in a certain sense, causes the performance of an illocution and a perlocutionary action at the same time. The utterance of Jesus triggers a perlocutionary action in the woman through the illocutionary intention. She *believed* that “Jesus is the Messiah, Lord” (intended perlocutionary effect, perlocutionary action) based on the MIF in the utterance of Jesus, she *preached* Christ to her village (illocutionary action, *F(p)*) and the village (public domain) also *confessed* that “Jesus is the Messiah” (perlocutionary action). Thus, these messianic intentions concretise the identity of Christians or the norms of Christian life in accordance with the MIF which is represented as Christian communal convictions, confession or creed in specific ways in the present world. Our identity is closely linked to what we ought to do, how to live, and what we ought to be in terms of Christian moral conduct according to the Word of God in contemporary life.

If Christian moral ethics executes the MIF to fulfil an intended perlocutionary effect in the present world according to the purpose of Jesus’ stories (the intention of the narrative text), it must be regarded as part of the total speech act. The words of Jesus constitute performative action with a specific intention which produces a perlocutionary effect on the believers for the sake of the kingdom of God. The MIF as a divine speech act serves as a significant guide to Christian ethical life (Christian ethics). In this regard, Christian ethics does not aim at focusing on human beings or on moral discipline. Rather, Christian ethics focuses primarily on Jesus’ performative action of his saving activity as a divine speech act in accordance with Jesus’

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<sup>153</sup> My translation in Greek for a more precise analysis.

illocutionary force (MIF) and its intended perlocutionary effect on the believers (PER) for the ultimate goal of the kingdom of God. This indicates that Christian ethics should pay attention to seeking the illocutionary force in the Bible (narrative biblical text) according to its intended perlocutionary effect in order to establish a “*perlocutionary ethical response*” (PER) in everyday life.

Consequently, the MIF in narratives inform “biblical Christian ethics” as PER. It offers new understandings of the ethical implications of the biblical narrative for the Christian life in the present. This is why “the Word (God) became flesh (Jesus) and lived among us (Holy Spirit)” (Jn 1:14). This ethical consideration demonstrates the messianic intention for the people of God and the world, that is, God’s kingdom according to God’s purpose and will.

In SAT, the MIF of the biblical narrative provides ethical responses for believers through Jesus’s intended perlocutionary effect which means the kind of response that he really wants them to produce. The relationship between the MIF in biblical narratives and the PER according to the intended perlocutionary effect in terms of God’s final messianic purpose in SAT can be described as the diagram below shows:



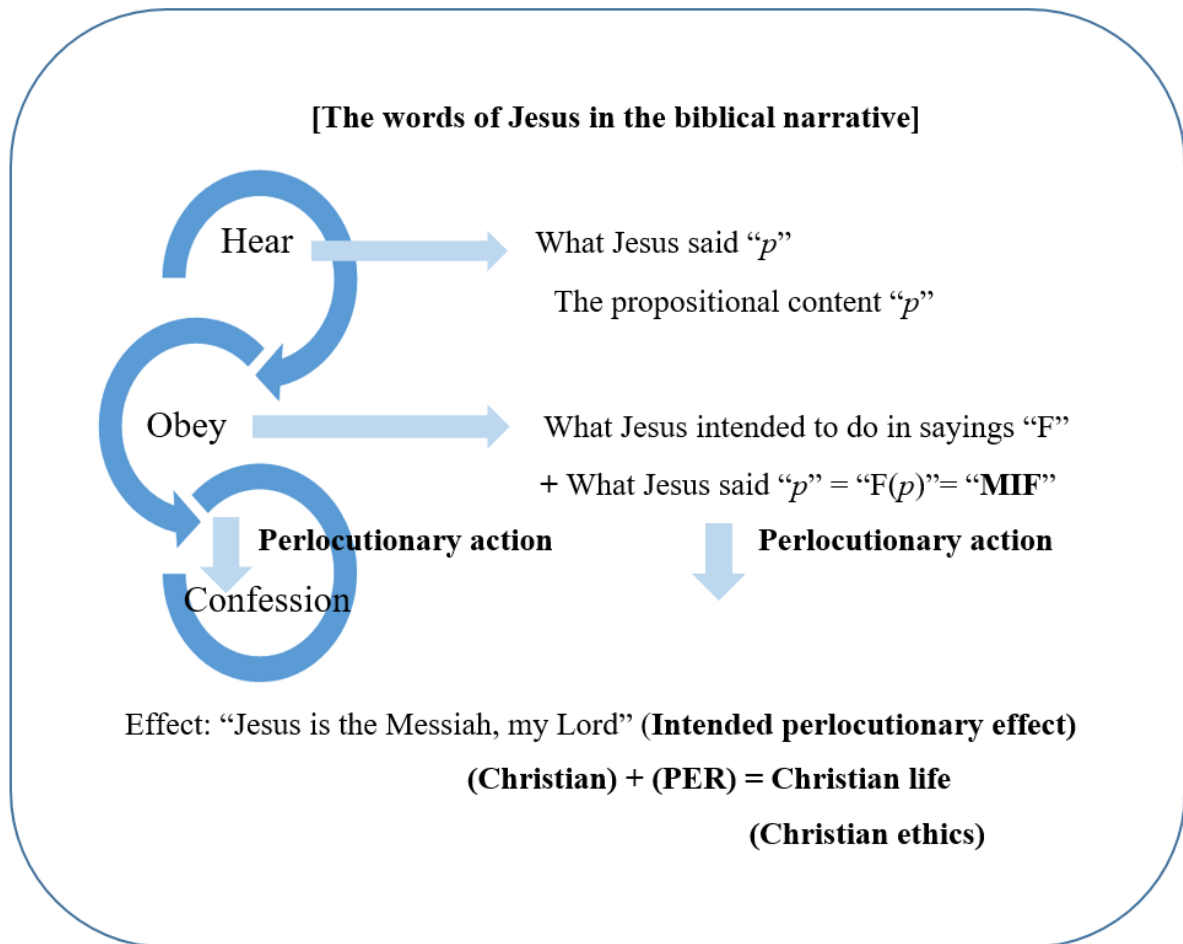


Diagram 6: The relationship between the MIF and the PER

#### 4.3.2 Christian Ethics as a public testimony in Christology through the MIF in relation to the intended perlocutionary effect

As we have seen above, if the MIF shapes the Christian moral life through the intended perlocutionary effect, then the possibility of a new approach to its ethical intent and content could be opened up from the perspective of Christology. This in turn refers to God’s saving activity (i.e., God’s kingdom) for the people of God. God’s performative action invites us to trust God, and to surrender in devotion and obedience to the words of Jesus (the MIF or messianic ministry) in real-life situations. It demands a specific ethical responsibility as a particular self-involving commitment with respect to the recognition of one’s role, attitude, calling as a Christian in the public domain. This means that the Christian moral life from the

perspective of SAT is not a dichotomy between cognitive-propositional knowledge and a cognitive-response of its ethical content. Rather, they cannot be separated from each other because they are completely force-neutral – “when a proposition is expressed it is always expressed in the performance of an illocutionary act” (Searle 1968:148; 1969:29). The proposition implies both “what the text meant” and “what the text would do” to the hearer at the same time. The MIF also creates a bridge between the *Bible* and *contemporary life* across time and place. Its energy and its intention are continuously being echoed in our lives as a real dynamic and powerful communicative action between Jesus and believers. Thus, this point has a new potential to establish continuity between the “biblical world” and the “contemporary world” through the MIF according to its intended perlocutionary effect on the Christian life and from the viewpoint of Christology.

However, it is difficult to use the dichotomy between “what the text meant” and “what the text would do” to explain the relationship between knowledge and action (i.e., a form of Cartesian dualism) or one’s relationship to others. The proposition, “I think, therefore I am (*cogito ergo sum*),” does not give an account of either individual action or social interaction because this consideration focuses on the private subjective consciousness. Such a view indicates that, “the disengaged identity and its attendant notion of freedom tend to generate an understanding of the individual as metaphysically independent of society” (Taylor 1985:8). Macmurray’s (1957:73) remark in this regard is noteworthy. He says:

If we make the ‘I think’ the primary postulate of philosophy, then not merely do we institute a dualism between theoretical and practical experience, but we make action logically inconceivable – a mystery... in which we necessarily believe, but which we can never comprehend.

The above statement shows that it is difficult to use dichotomy to understand society and others in the public domain. On the other hand, using SAT to understand illocutionary force (MIF) enables us to determine the public setting and social interaction in the communicative act between Jesus and others. This is because the words of Jesus can be regarded as a divine speech act. According to Taylor (1985:259), language produces a particular public space or sphere. For example, in a wedding ceremony, the minister proclaims, “From now, they become husband and wife”. In the spoken discourse, what the speaker does with words creates a certain context (a public domain) that a man and a woman have decided to live the rest of their lives together

officially before many witnesses. After that, no one could raise any objection to them being husband and wife. Furthermore, such a response produces a new social reality (public area) and it shows that actions contain communicative practice in a certain context according to the norms and practices in that context. This means that a person in a particular community carries his/her identity like their “face” (to use Lévinas’ term), and acts out a certain role, position and responsibility in the context of a conversation. For Lévinas (1985:87), “Face and discourse are tied. The face speaks.”

Accordingly, in SAT, the characteristics of the MIF can be likened to the face that represents Jesus’ character (identity) in a speech act in which the hearers are urged to do something through an illocutionary notion in accordance with its intended perlocutionary effect. It is closely linked to Christology, “Jesus is the Messiah, Lord” and to God’s saving activity through Jesus Christ in the present world. The point of the MIF is to invite believers to participate in God’s saving work in accordance with the intended perlocutionary effect which creates a new public domain and transforms their lives with their new roles and new responsibilities as Christians.

Returning to the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-42, we can see that this passage presents the social status of women and men in terms of gender and the relationship between Jews and Samaritans as issues of religious practices or tradition that relate to morality concerns. As Botha (1991:88) has shown in a SAT-oriented reading of this biblical text, the unspoken language expresses a culturally shared knowledge that includes various social settings, customs and rules in a community:

Jesus and the woman meet as complete strangers.  
 They encounter each other in a ‘foreign’ country, that is, Samaria.  
 They are allusions to the patriarchs and worship-shared knowledge between them.  
 Jesus is a *male Jew*; -she is a *female Samaritan*; an impossible conversation in terms of the socio-historical context.  
 They are alone, which is also socially unacceptable.  
 Jews and Samaritans do not share cooking or eating utensils (*his italics*).

This culturally shared knowledge of conventions provides some information about

“institutional facts” in the biblical narrative which demonstrates standards of living or patterns of behaviour in human community. Before Jesus and the Samaritan woman engaged in a conversation, the custom that Jews and Samaritans do not share things was already in place. However, we assume that after their conversation the woman’s public place would be/is changed by the utterance of Jesus through the MIF according to its intended perlocutionary effect. In other words, the MIF has the power to create a new public domain in the present and to produce transformation.

The Samaritan woman recognizes that “Jesus is the Messiah” through the MIF in the conversation with Jesus and, then, she preaches Jesus as the Messiah to her fellow villagers (v.29). On hearing her, the villagers go out to meet Jesus (v. 30), even though in terms of the socio-historical context, Jews and Samaritans do not interact or share things in common. Interestingly, the villagers believed in Jesus because of the woman’s testimony (v. 39). This testimony is the result of the perlocutionary action through the MIF in the utterance of Jesus as an intended perlocutionary effect, and the woman’s testimony through the intended perlocutionary effect constructs a new public setting as the people accept the words of the woman as a new world of reality. It means that the public domain is totally changed by the woman’s testimony of Jesus as the Messiah. This event engages social issues such as gender, ethnic and religious discrimination through Jesus’ MIF according to its intended perlocutionary effect. This is confirmed by verse 40 in which as they listened to the utterance of the woman, the villagers came to Jesus and asked him to stay with them. In those days, it was unimaginable that Jews and Samaritans would meet, talk and stay together (Gench 2004:111-112). This shows that Jesus’ MIF according to its intended perlocutionary effect not only builds up a new public domain but also dissolves the issues of gender and of ethnic discrimination. Because of the MIF in the utterance of Jesus, many more believed in him as the Messiah, the true Saviour of the world (vv. 41-42). In short, the woman’s personal testimony about Jesus through the MIF according to its intended perlocutionary effect creates a new public domain, in which the villagers are invited into a new reality of the world in accordance with the MIF point which the woman experienced through the spoken word of Jesus. In this sense, the people also become a “public testimony” through the illocutionary force and energy which results from a completely changed public arena. That is to say, the community according to the MIF is required to

participate in this new reality as a transformation of life.

Thus, we see how Jesus' MIF according to its intended perlocutionary effect moves from the exchange of conversation to the Christian life with a new role and new responsibility as a witness of Jesus in the public domain. Ethical responsibility should prompt one to follow Jesus' intention in his sayings in faith as they seek Jesus' illocutionary action through the MIF which shapes them as a living testimony of the MIF in the present world. The intended perlocutionary effect empowers people in their role as Christians to invite the public to trust, love, devotion and obedience through the MIF, which can resolve social issues such as gender as well as, ethnic and religious discrimination. Therefore, the response Jesus would anticipate in the narrative text is that the people of God today also respond to its MIF from the witness of the words of Jesus as public testimony.

In particular, "Like the promise, testimony establishes a connection between what one says and the way things actually are. Indeed... testimony is an illocutionary act whereby a witness's say so is itself evidence for the truth of what is said" (Vanhoozer 1998:291). This means that the Bible is the testimony of Christian communities to God's (Jesus') illocutionary action in history which indicates that interpreting the *Bible must be treated as testimony in the public domain by the people of God* (Vanhoozer 1998:292). Vanhoozer (2002:161) states the point as follows:

The conclusion highlights what follows for biblical interpreters from this analysis [speech act theory]. It is not insignificant that the leading categories for describing interpreters-*witness, disciple*-are drawn from the language of theology. For nothing less will do in describing our properly *theological responsibility to hear, and to understand, what God and neighbor are saying/doing when they address us* (my emphasis).

The above point demonstrates the intended perlocutionary effect in the Christian encounter through the illocutionary force and energy which require us to respond properly as witnesses of Scripture with "theological responsibility" according to the words of Jesus in the public setting. Thus, the MIF according to its intended perlocutionary effect influences one to be a witness of Jesus due to the illocutionary force and energy in Jesus' speech act in the public domain.

#### 4.4 Revisiting the presence of the Kingdom in the relationship between truth and testimony and its Ethical implications in relation to SAT

Earlier, we noted that the presence of the kingdom represents the Word of God. If this statement is correct, the issue of the kingdom must be the truth of what the text communicates to the people of God.<sup>154</sup> The presence of the kingdom itself commits believers to trust and obey the Word of God and not only according to the truth of what is said. What then does this mean? What do we mean when we confess that the presence of the kingdom is true?

The notion of truth,<sup>155</sup> or of something being true, is difficult to define (Gelven 2010:33), but “One quite early definition is also the one most commonly accepted for statements (or propositions), namely, the realist or ‘correspondence’, theory of truth” (Fahlbusch 2008:557). It indicates that “propositional truth is thus a kind of correspondence or agreement between the meaning of a proposition and what actually exists” (Machuga 2015:208). On this matter, Machuga (2015:208) writes:

And since the concept used in a definition, according to Aristotle, only exist in the minds of human beings, it follows that “true” refers to a kind of correspondence or agreement between the mental realm and the realm of things whose existence does not depend upon human thought. Rocks and plants and animals exist whether or not anyone is thinking about them, but concepts

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<sup>154</sup> According to Pannenberg (1991:1-62), systematic theology aims to seek and answer to the question of truth for the confession of the Word of God or the Gospel. However, “the postmodern and multicultural turn in contemporary culture has raised again, in a powerful way, the question of truth for any ethic or religion that claims to move beyond the particular...What is truth?” (Padgett 2006:104). “The blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction, reality and imagination, is a fascinating aspect of current culture in the West” (Keifert 2006:2). For example, in Judges 19-21, we read of horrible stories of rape, murder, war, and conspiracy (Lawrie 2015:37). In such cases, how do we consider the Bible as truth? Is the Bible actually true? The scope of this project does not allow me to fully situate a definition of truth within the broader developments and contours of the discourse of philosophy and theology. However, my aim is to show how an understanding of biblical truth is adequate to the Christian confession, “Jesus is the Messiah, Lord” – as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6-7) through SAT. For Padgett (2006:107), “the most important source for the understanding of truth as the mediated disclosure of being is the Gospel of John. Truth (*aletheia*) is a key term in the fourth Gospel, and here it is already linked for us to Jesus. This truth is not simply information but the reality of the presence of God.”

<sup>155</sup> Fahlbusch (2008:557) writes that, “English ‘truth’ translates into Greek *alethes* and Hebrew *’emet*, as well as Latin *Veritas*. It carries the sense of being reliable, credible, honest. The truth opens up reality to us, or mediates reality through words or another medium such as visions. *Theories of truth in western philosophy typically focus on statements*, rather than person, art, or other true things; another long tradition, however, thinks of truth in terms of being” (*my emphasis*).

exist only as they are being “thought” by rational minds.

Although Plato held a very similar view in his dialogue, *The Sophist* (263b), he developed a theory of forms (or ideas) by connecting the notion of truth more fully to intellectual intuition of the true and eternal forms as the basic structures of reality (Fahlbusch 2008:557). The approach seems to search for a definition of truth because it alludes to a relation (*saying something of something*), and to being (*what is*). However, the concept becomes very vague when it comes to what, on the part of reality (being), is responsible for the truth of a saying. Thomas Aquinas accepted the Aristotelian and Platonic traditions since, “He developed the Aristotelian view in a slightly different direction, seeing truth as ‘the conformity of thing and intellect [*adaequatio rei et intellectus*’] (*Truth 1.1*) or, otherwise expressed, ‘the conformity [*conformitatem*] of intellect and thing’ (*Summa Theol.* 1, q. 16, art.2)” (Fahlbusch 2008:557). Truth is simply the agreement between the intellect (verbal or mental idea) and the thing (reality) (Pletz 2010:105). This view is closely linked to how words relate to reality and how words influence the world. It also refers to the essential identity between the word and what it means. This perspective has influenced many philosophers since:

Philosophers normally think that the only kinds of things that can be true (or false) in the paradigmatic or realist sense of “true” are things such as assertions, claims, statements, or propositions.<sup>156</sup> This sense of “true” means “having the truth-value true,” that is, being in

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<sup>156</sup> According to James (2014:198), “*Truth ... is a property of certain of our ideas. It means their agreement, as falsity means their disagreement, with reality.* Pragmatists and intellectualists both accept this definition as a matter of course. They begin to quarrel only after the question is raised as to what may be meant by the term ‘agreement,’ and what by the term ‘reality,’ when reality is taken as something for our ideas to agree with” (*my emphasis*). Similarly, Russell (1986:163) argues that, “*The world contains facts... and there are also beliefs, which have reference to facts, and by reference to facts are either true or false.* I will try first of all give you a preliminary explanation of what I mean by a ‘fact’. When I speak of a fact – I do not propose to attempt an exact definition, but an explanation, so that you will know what I am talking about – I mean the kind of thing that makes a proposition true or false. If I say ‘It is raining’, what I say is true in a certain condition of weather and is false in other conditions of weather. The condition of weather that makes my statement true (or false as the case may be), is what I should call a ‘fact’. If I say ‘Socrates is dead’, my statement will be true owing to a certain physiological occurrence which happened in Athens long ago. If I say, ‘Gravitation varies inversely as the square of the distance’, my statement is rendered true by astronomical fact. If I say, ‘Two and two are four’, it is arithmetical fact that makes my statement true. On the other hand, if I say, ‘Socrates is alive’, or ‘Gravitation varies directly as the distance’, or ‘Two and two are five’, the very same facts which made my previous statements true shows that these new statements are false” (*my emphasis*). Moreover, Wittgenstein (1971:57, 77) points out that, “The picture agrees with reality or fails to agree; it is correct or incorrect, true or false (2.21). What a picture represents it represents independently of its truth or falsity, by means of its pictorial form (2.22). What a picture represents is its sense (2.221). The agreement and disagreement of its sense with reality constitutes its truth or falsity (2.222). In order to tell whether a picture is true or false we must compare it with reality (2.223) ... So what is essential in a proposition is what all propositions that can express the same sense have in common (3.24).”



accord with what is the case (Davis 2006:87).

In other words, truth refers to an agreement between the idea (words) and the thing (reality) which we call true. This truth appears to the whole world to be used as common sense with the recognition that the human being expresses a property that propositions have when they bear the requisite relation to what exists. How then does this help us to explain the biblical concept of truth? In such a context, is it reasonable to say that, “the presence of the kingdom is true in propositions?”

If a true statement refers to what is the case, then a true statement must tell us something about reality. This would mean that a propositional truth discloses and demonstrates something about reality which is expressed in human language. A propositional truth in language often occurs in the form of a “language event”. This is because, existence is expressed in most cases through language. Language itself has the power to bring into being something that was not there before the words were spoken (Fuchs 1964:209-222). It enacts some kind of event:

The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by event. Its verity is in fact an event, a process, the process, namely, of its verifying itself, its veri-fication. Its validity is the process of its valid-action (James 1907:142).

In other words, a true statement can become a reality through a “language event” which implies that the propositional truth is also a mediated disclosure of reality with its linguistic force that is true. If this so, we must consider the proposition that “*the presence of the kingdom is true*” in terms of Jesus’ words in the language event (illocutionary action) – Jesus Christ, the Word (God) who was made flesh, according to John 1:14 – *and its effects on the people or certain communities in the biblical text, not just as a simple propositional approach.*<sup>157</sup> This is because

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<sup>157</sup> In accordance with the aforementioned, I will investigate the concept of biblical truth only in the New Testament in order to prove that the proposition of “the presence of the kingdom is true” and to investigate its ethical implication. To explain briefly the notion of truth from the perspective of the Old Testament, Olson (2006:20) helpfully writes that, “the Old Testament word for ‘truth’ has as its root the three-consonant Hebrew verb *’mn*, ‘to be reliable, sure, firm, enduring, trustworthy,’ and in the causative *Hiphil* stem, ‘to stand firm, to trust, believe in.’ The object of the trust is typically a person, a message, or a promise. Truth...involves a character of reliability and trustworthiness in relationships over time, grounded in past experience and extending in confidence into an as yet unseen future...Material evidence and the testimony of witnesses provide grounds for determining the truth (or *’emet*) of a matter... One other use of the word *’emet* combines the two senses of personal trustworthiness and more objective seeking of truth based on evidence and testimony.”



the presence of the kingdom is not a true proposition in a general philosophical sense.<sup>158</sup> Rather, it is in relation to the Jesus' language event. It demonstrates that a language event presupposes continuity between the words and the actions of Jesus which are capable of creating faith in the people as truth (cf. Fuchs 1964:30, 212). Jesus' utterance amounts to Jesus' action, that is, speaking is an act of performance, as word and deed are one. Thus, "the presence of the kingdom" can be seen as Jesus' language event (illocutionary action: what Jesus has done) in the Bible which results in the *confession (experience) of a believing community* based on a common understanding of the words of Jesus as truth (or expressions of truth).

When Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6) as an illocutionary act of assertion, he is telling the truth and not lying (Jn 8:44-45). Further, Jesus says, "If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true; there is another who bears witness to me, and I know that the testimony which he bears to me is true" (Jn 5:31). Thus, *if Jesus (the presence of the kingdom) becomes truth, someone must bear witness to Jesus who is the truth or to the words of Jesus*. John the Baptist testified to Jesus Christ as the truth (Jn 5:33). How, then, can this be explained?

Biblical testimony is shown as the illocutionary act of assertion through Jesus' illocutionary force (especially the MIF) according to its perlocutionary effect on the people which can be judged as true or false (as in the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-42). The assertion is an utterance that says things are true or false. Truth in Scripture is ascribed to an assertion of a certain event through Jesus' illocutionary action and its force which produces a perlocutionary effect on people such as trust and obedience. This perlocutionary act is the process of conjecturing the intended outcome of a sequence of illocutionary acts in the words of Jesus according to Jesus' language event (illocutionary act), which causes a change in the attitudes and minds of believers towards God's ways as witnesses in the public domain. The

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<sup>158</sup> If we apply a philosophical truth to the biblical truth in order to prove that the proposition of "the presence of the kingdom is true," we would never be able to do it. The reason is that the content of Scripture is based more on the confession (*experience*) to God and Jesus, and not on the physics as propositional facts. Thus, we must find different ways to discuss it.

perlocutionary act has an effect on the hearer which is achieved by an illocutionary act in the utterances of Jesus as reality. It implies that the truth of an idea in the biblical text is more than propositional truth (a true statement) because words create truth (reality) through the illocutionary action in a particular event. Such a biblical idea of truth hardly seems to be the notion of truth that philosophers propound in terms of what is true or false. If the biblical concept of truth would be accepted as indeed true, it would require one's testimony of Jesus Christ in his words and deeds as a language event.

Accordingly, *the issue of biblical truth reflects on testimony as the illocutionary act of assertion through the illocutionary force as an event*. The following statement in 1 John 2:7-8 is a good example that illustrates a form of biblical truth, as mentioned above. John testified to Jesus' statement about a "new command" (Jn 13:34)<sup>159</sup> in relation to truth in 1 John 2:7-8:

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new commandment *that is true (truth) in him and in you*, because the darkness is passing away and *true light is already shining (my emphasis)*.

The biblical passage above clearly shows that John heard and appreciated the words of Jesus as the truth. That is, "F(p)" where "F" is the illocutionary force (love) and "p" is the proposition (new commandment as the truth: love one another). The passage can be related to 1 John 4:20, "Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen". It means that John considers both the teaching of Jesus as well as Jesus' deeds (event) as the truth – that Jesus loves the people with God's love. John therefore becomes a witness to the words and deeds of Jesus as truth through Jesus' illocutionary action, testifying to the people that Jesus is the true light of the world. We can say that John's testimony when it comes to Jesus' illocutionary action (event) shows that what Jesus has done for human beings is true if the statements made by the witness are true. In this sense, the words of Jesus can be counted as truth through Jesus' illocutionary action in a testimony by the community. It can be illustrated

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<sup>159</sup> "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (Jn 13:34).

as:

1. John heard the words of Jesus as “ $F(p)$ ” which contains Jesus’ deeds (event) that Jesus has loved the people.
2. John recognized that Jesus is the truth through Jesus’ illocutionary action in his sayings.
3. John testified of Jesus to the people by the illocutionary force according to its perlocutionary effect (PE): he is a testimony of Jesus.
4. If people accept John’s testimony as true, the words of Jesus can be regarded as the truth in the community which creates the common confession to Jesus.

The diagram below is an attempt to illustrate an understanding of the process of analysing the notion of biblical truth as testimony in relation to 1 John 2:7-8:

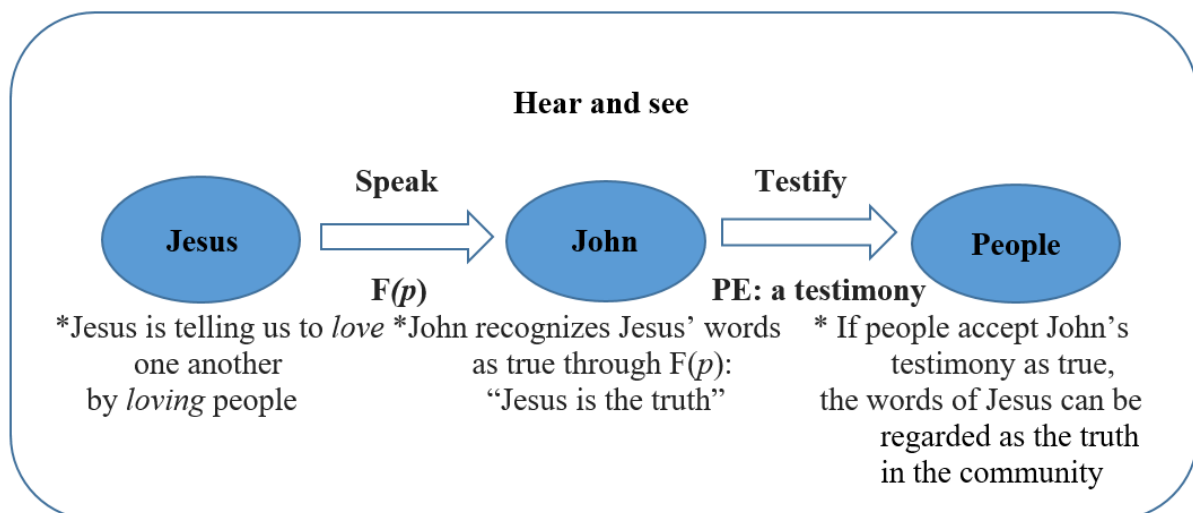


Diagram 7: The process of analysing the notion of biblical truth as testimony

At this point, we may make the proposition that “the presence of the kingdom is true”. The biblical concept of truth would be true through Jesus’ illocutionary action and with a testimony from one who has experienced Jesus in his sayings (event) and who confesses Jesus as the way, the truth and the life in a community. The proposition, “the presence of the kingdom is true”, becomes true in the events of what Jesus has done for the people of God (illocutionary act) because the presence of the kingdom can be seen in the words of Jesus and his acts towards human beings and the world. If we approach the issue of truth in the context of the kingdom as

a philosophical idea of truth rather than the biblical notion of truth, it would reduce truth to the proposition that “the presence of the kingdom is true”. Since the presence of the kingdom is not the physical or propositional facts (simple statement) but the confession through Jesus’ illocutionary act according to its perlocutionary act by the witnesses of Jesus, such an approach cannot arrive at the biblical concept of truth about the presence of the kingdom. The biblical idea of truth has a totally different starting point from the philosophical notion. It must see events in the words of Jesus (language event). Precisely, *the presence of the kingdom can be seen as Jesus’ language event which creates the Christian communal conviction, confession, or creed through Jesus’ illocutionary act by the witnesses of Jesus who accept the words and deeds of Jesus as true*. In this sense, we can say that the presence of the kingdom is true.

The presence of the kingdom must be treated as a testimony to the words of Jesus by the people of God through Jesus’ illocutionary action in the public domain. Such a view of the presence of the kingdom raises a Christian moral response as public testimony in Christology through Jesus’ illocutionary force according to its intended perlocutionary effect. The biblical notion of truth (about the presence of the kingdom) is closely linked to Christian ethical life (Christian ethics). Hence, it requires following the words of Jesus responsibly as a believer through the illocutionary force, which prompts one to love God and neighbour in everyday life (Jn 13:34; 1 Jn 2:7-8; 3:11). Lash (1986:42) writes that:

It follows that, for the practice of Christianity, the performance of the biblical text, to be true, it must be not “true to life”, but “true to his life”; and not only “true to his life,” but “true to God.” that it is so, and may be made so, is at once our responsibility, our hope and our prayer.

Consequently, the presence of the kingdom as Jesus’ illocutionary act (Jesus’ language event) and its illocutionary force require some responsibilities from us as witnesses in specific ways. This is because Jesus’ illocutionary force creates its perlocutionary effect in which the truly intended perlocutionary effect in the people bears faithful testimony to the words of Jesus in actual situations. The intended perlocutionary effect enacts the Christian life as a testimony in the present world. Therefore, Christian ethics must see Jesus’ illocutionary act and execute its perlocutionary effect on the public for the sake of the presence of the kingdom of God.

#### 4.4.1 Revisiting the presence of the Kingdom in the relationship between Revelation and Divine Discourse and their moral effects according to SAT

The Bible reveals God's self not only by saying something about God, but also by doing things in the lives of its readers. God in, the Scripture, exhibits God's self by promising, warning, and commanding the people of God in order to attain the kingdom of God in the present life. Such an illocutionary act by God in the Bible can be seen as God's performative act. This implies that when God utters something to the people of God, the word of God does not just refer to propositional facts, but it also does something in believers. This act of God is a continual process of performing God's will to keep the Word of God active in believers through God's self-involving activity. It means that God's utterance to the hearer entails God's self-devotion and responsibility under an obligation to do something when it comes to fulfilling the Word of God in the present and God's ability to do something in the future. It is closely linked to the fact that the Bible is God's divine action in discourse<sup>160</sup> which reveals what God is like

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<sup>160</sup> I have selected Wolterstorff's notion of divine discourse because it serves as a good conceptual resource for the main argument of this thesis. It shows how speech act philosophy could strengthen an understanding of the performance of the ethics of the kingdom with which to engage the divine discourse in biblical passages, which can be understood not as God's revelation but rather as a divine speech act. According to Vanhoozer (2002:163), Wolterstorff's concept of divine discourse is philosophically necessary in biblical interpretation and as a theological concept. Wolterstorff's method in his book, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflection on the Claim that God Speaks* (New York: Cambridge University, 1995), is based on the speech act theory of JL Austin. The book's main aim is to discover "how to go about reading a text to find out what God might have said or be saying with that text" (Wolterstorff 1995:38). This entails the idea that God is a participant in human discourse. Similarly, Alston (1985:5-20) argues that to understand God's action or the Word of God in the Bible, one must conceptually elaborate the manner in which God enters into interpersonal communication with human beings. This is contrary to Barth's (1936:140-141) argument against the claim that human speech may be appropriated for divine discourse: "As readers of Scripture and hearers of proclamation we can and must, of course, work with certain general conceptual materials, apparently repeating or anticipating what God has said to this or that man... But in doing so we have always to bear in mind that these materials are our own work and are not to be confused with the concrete fullness of the Word of God itself which we recall and for which we wait, but only point to it. What God said and what God will say is always quite different from what we can and must say to ourselves and others about its content. Not only the word of preaching... but even the word of Scripture through which God speaks to us becomes in fact quite different when it passes from God's lips to our ears and our lips." If the Bible is seen as a divine discourse in normative words, an account needs to be offered of how the words of the Bible are to be read if we want to discern what God says with them. Thus, Wolterstorff (1995:132) suggests "authorial-discourse" interpretation. However, Wolterstorff (1995:130-170) is opposed to the textual-sense interpretation defended by Paul Ricoeur, as well as to the performance-interpretation elaborated in rather different ways by Jacques Derrida. In addition, if God speaks to us through the Bible, then God is performing certain illocutionary acts such as promising, warning, and exhorting, and therefore reading or interpreting the Bible means finding out what God means in saying what he says. This entails "testimonial knowledge" which is knowledge gained from the spoken or written word; it indicates that Logos has communicated God's self in human language as God's own speech (Wahlberg 2004:1-19).

(revelation). “The Scriptures are God’s testimony of himself” (Luther 1960:227).

Through the concept of the kingdom, God’s self can be expressed as divine discourse. Generally, divine speech is regarded as divine revelation<sup>161</sup> (Mackey 2000:287). For Barth (1936:162), divine discourse, the Word of God, is God in revelatory action, and revelation means the unveiling of what is veiled (Barth 1936:118-119). However, Wolterstorff (1995:10) challenges Barth’s view and argues that, “divine speech disappeared into divine revelation because speaking of God speaking was taken to be a metaphorical way of attributing revelation to God.” Wolterstorff (1995:19) insists that divine discourse is not revelation, but rather, a speech act, which totally differs from divine revelation:

If we assume that illocutionary actions, such as asserting, commanding, promising, and asking, are a species of revelation, they will elude our grasp. It’s true that in promising someone something, one reveals various things about oneself. But *the promising does not itself consist of revealing something – does not itself consist of making the unknown known (my emphasis).*

This shows that “revelation” as a feature of illocutionary language in the Bible represents God’s divine action as divine discourse and not simply knowledge about God as the revealed propositions of the Bible, but as a performative act (Wolterstorff 1995:19). Furthermore, “revelation is not merely the communication of truths about God but, more important, God’s self-communication in act and word” (Vanhoozer 2005:38). In the text, therefore, certain

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<sup>161</sup> According to Reymond (1988:4-5), “the Bible teaches that God revealed himself to people ‘at many times and in various ways’ (Heb. 1:1-2). The most common nominal expressions in the Old Testament for this revelatory idea are the phrases ‘the word of Yahweh [or God]’, which occurs scores of times, and ‘the law [of Yahweh]’, the proper meaning of which is ‘instruction,’ which in turn strongly suggests ‘authoritative divine communication.’ The primary Old Testament verb expressing the revelatory idea is *galah*, occurring some twenty-two times, the root meaning of which appears to be ‘nakedness,’ and which, when applied to revelation, seems to suggest the removal of obstacles to ‘perception,’ for the prophet is often spoken of as a ‘seer’ who ‘sees’ visions (see Isa. 1:1; 2:1; 13:1; 29:10-11; Jer. 38:21; Lam 2:14; Ezek. 1:3, 4; 13:3; Amos 1:1; Mic. 1:1; Hab. 1:1; 2:1). Occasionally the verb, *yada*, in its causative stem (“to make known”) is also employed in the sense of ‘revealing’ (Ps. 25:4; 98:2). In the New Testament the primary word groups for the revelatory idea are formed from the verbs *apokalypso* (‘to reveal’; see *apokalypsis*, ‘revelation’) and *phaneroo*, (‘to manifest’; see *epiphaneia*, ‘manifestation’). What was it that God revealed? He revealed (1) both his existence and something of his nature, as well as his moral precepts, through man’s nature as *imago Dei* (Prov. 20:27; Rom. 2:15), (2) his glory, in creation and nature, in a non-propositional manner (Ps. 19:1, 3; Rom. 1:20), and (3) his wisdom and power, both through his act of ordinary providence and his mighty acts in the ‘history of salvation’ or *Heilsgeschichte* (e.g., see the sparing of Noah’s family at the flood, the exodus, the incarnation, Christ’s cross and resurrection).”

knowledge is regarded as an informative fact which simply indicates the propositional content to be communicated between the text and the reader. Wahlberg (2004:26) states that, “Propositions are commonly conceived of as the primary bearers of truth-values (i.e., they can be true or false). They are expressed by that-clauses (that now is white, that spring will come, etc.)”. The knowledge of God in the Bible as objective fact only conveys to the reader formal information such as truth or falsehood. However, *God does not only reveal God’s self as knowledge about God in the Bible, but also as divine acts, for example, an act of blessing, promising, warning, exhorting, and so forth to the people of God. It is precisely by responding to the various illocutions in Scripture as revelation, which is related to God’s divine discourse – by believing its assertions, by trusting its promises, by obeying its commands – that people are able to follow God’s purpose for the sake of the kingdom (cf. Vanhoozer 2005:68).*

Wolterstorff (1997:29) also supports the assumption that God not only reveals things but also speaks. However, he argues that we should not confuse speaking with revealing:

Take promising, for example. Suppose you wanted to analyze promising as a species of revealing; how would your analysis go? Presumably you would suggest that to promise to do something is to reveal that you intend to do it. But it is easy to see that that suggestion will not do. You can promise to do something without revealing that you intend to do it, because, for example, you do not intend to do it and so cannot reveal that you do. People do that sort of thing all the time. And conversely, you can reveal that you intend to do something without promising to do it; you may not want to bind yourself in the way that promising binds one.

As we have noted above, biblical language demonstrates a particular divine purpose such as promise, warning, and exhortation, all of which do something to the believer through God’s Word in order to establish communication between God and the people of God. Each form of biblical language does not just give instructive information about God but unveils what is veiled in divine discourse with a certain act presented as a communicative act. On this matter, Barr (1982:77-78) notes that:

In so far as it is good to use the term “revelation” at all, it is entirely as true to say that in the Old Testament revelation is by verbal communication as to say that it is by acts in history. We have verbal communication both in that God speaks directly with men and in that men learn from other and earlier men through the verbal form of tradition...The acts of God are meaningful because they are set within this frame of verbal communication. God tells what he is doing, or tells what he is going to do... A God who acted in history would be a mysterious



and supra-personal fate if the action was not linked with this verbal conversation.<sup>162</sup>

Consequently, revelation (Scripture) does not only refer to the propositional dimensions of truth or falsehood as informative facts (e.g. God is one), but also to performative acts in human history. Revelation in Scripture shows God's illocutionary act, (i.e., what God has done "F" in saying "p" as "F(p)) and perlocutionary act (what is effected such as obedience or disobedience) in believers. It means that *revelation is what God says and does in and with God's words to the people of God in order to fulfil God's purpose.*

For example, in Mark 12:28-31, one of the scribes asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." This passage does not simply indicate the propositional content, "God is one" (i.e., monotheism), but it also exhorts one to love God with all of one's heart, with all one's understanding, and with all of one's strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself. This saying of Jesus is neither simply *p* nor simply *F* but *F(p)*. It entails a particular divine purpose which enables the hearer to do something according to the inherent linguistic force. The utterance of Jesus can be represented as *F(p)* where "F" is the illocutionary force (Jesus' specific intent) and "*p*" is the propositional

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<sup>162</sup> Barr strongly argues in his article "Revelation through History in the Old Testament and in Modern Theology" that: "[W]e come to those texts which have supplied the basic examples for the idea of revelation through history, such as the Exodus story. If you treat this record as revelation through history, you commonly speak as if the basis were the doing of certain divine acts (what, exactly, they were is often difficult to determine), while the present form of tradition in its detail and circumstantiality is 'interpretation' of these acts, or 'meditation' upon them, or theological reflection prompted by them. Thus, one may hear the great revelatory passage of Exodus 3 described as 'interpretation' of this divine act of salvation, or as an inference from the fact that God had led Israel out of Egypt. But I cannot make this scheme fit the texts, for this is not how the texts represent the Exodus events. Far from representing the divine acts as the basis of all knowledge of God and all communication with him, they represent God as communicating freely with men, and particularly with Moses, before, during, and after these events. Far from the incident at the burning bush being an 'interpretation' of the divine acts, it is a direct communication from God to Moses of his purposes and intentions. This conversation, instead of being represented as an interpretation of the divine act, is a precondition of it. If God had not told Moses what he did, the Israelites would not have demanded their escape from Egypt, and the deliverance at the Sea of Reeds would not have taken place."



expression (Jesus' utterance) (cf. Searle 1969:31). Jesus' saying expressed within its propositional content is the illocutionary action, that is, they are performed simultaneously (cf. Searle 1969:30). Therefore, *this command reveals something about God  $F(p)$ , but it is not mere revelation  $p$ ; the point is to obey  $F$ , that is, the divine discourse  $F(p)$ .*

Accordingly, a speech act in biblical language such as promise, warning, and exhortation cannot simply be assimilated with revelation. The intended function of biblical language of promise and command is not to inform us of what we do not know but to enable us to take on responsibilities and to require things of us. Hence, trust and obedience are the appropriate responses (Wolterstorff 1995:35). If divine discourse is revelation, it would only refer to the propositional dimension of the utterance of God, which cannot do something to believers and cannot reveal the essence of divine discourse. According to Lanser (1981:73), "Propositional content, illocutionary content, and speech act context together determine the conventional perlocutionary effects of the verbal performance, the rhetorical impact the discourse will have." Thiselton (1992:75) also points out that, theologically, a hermeneutic of an embodied text reflects an incarnational Christology in which revelation operates through the interwovenness of word and deed, not only through the words of Jesus. Barth (1957:267) writes that God derives from the divine speech act, the incarnate life of Jesus Christ. Bauckham's (2004:29) remark in this regard is:

Jesus reveals the unique presence and action of God which is Jesus' own history... Jesus does not merely illustrate what God is like, nor is he merely the representatively fullest instantiation of humanity united with God. His unique human life, death, and resurrection are at the same time uniquely God's human history, in which God's unique act of self-giving love for all humanity took place.

Therefore, divine discourse is part of God's total speech act in Jesus Christ which does something to the believer in accordance with the illocutionary force. The illocutionary force also creates a perlocutionary effect resulting in appropriate responses from believers such as trust or obedience, that is, the "*perlocutionary ethical response*" (PER), or "Christian ethics".

The presence of the kingdom as divine discourse can be expressed through the language of promise between God and God's people, which is in most cases closely linked to eschatology. It entails how to live according to the Word of God in the present with future hope in order to attain God's kingdom and God's purpose. The eschatological covenant, as primary content of divine speech, shows a tension between *what should be* and *what will be* in the description of the present which is not yet fulfilled in terms of the yet unseen goal, but which also provides guidelines or norms for Christian life. Divine discourse of the covenant bridges the gap between *what is* and *what ought to be*, and it is interwoven with the themes of covenant and eschatology (Thiselton 2006a:92). It has the power to do something in accordance with the language force and purpose. Thus, divine discourse is not only revelation (propositional expression), but rather a performative act, which urges the believer to do something for God's kingdom. In most cases, the expression of revelation has no transitive verb, as in the statement, God is creator or God is Lord.

However, divine discourse as language of promise uses a transitive verb, for example, in the statement, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3). It means that divine discourse in the language of promise has a specific purpose and it will be performed at the right time. Divine discourse of the covenant represents eschatological blessing. The term "eschatology" is used to describe the end-time or the fullness of time; it arouses the feeling of the imminence of a crisis and the need to make an urgent decision to change one's life (Ricoeur 1981:165). Yoder (1971:53) further explains that to live eschatologically is to live in the light of a hope which, defying present frustrations, defines a present position in terms of the yet unseen goal which gives it meaning. The longing for God grows among the people as God creates a history of promise towards a complete future which encompasses the whole promise until God is all in all (Harvie 2009:18). Thus, having a hope for the future in the language of promise implies living our everyday life by faith. The divine discourse of covenant relates to the implications of Christian hope<sup>163</sup> for moral human action in the present world.

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<sup>163</sup> Pannenberg (1998:173) explains that hope, like faith, rests on trust in the promises of God, together with "a sense of the incompleteness of life as it now is... related to the confidence that it is oriented to its possible fulfilment." Faith as trust "in God and in his promise is never apart from hope".

On this issue, the presence of the kingdom as divine discourse of the covenant can be performed in the believing community to create a new social reality through the illocutionary force and its perlocutionary effect. Unlike the simple propositional content of the message of the kingdom (locution level), the illocutionary force and its perlocutionary effect create the new world of God's kingdom and fulfil God's kingdom based on God's intention. If believers truly encounter the illocutionary point (intent) in God's saying, they should naturally perform perlocutionary responses in their lives. The *ethical conception of the kingdom of God is itself "a rule-governed form of behaviour" in God's speech acts such as the value system of righteousness in the Christian community*. Therefore, through divine discourse, Christians can understand how to act both in relation to God and *coram Deo* – in relation to the world and to each other (Brümmer 1992:59).

#### **4.4.2 Revisiting the presence of the Kingdom and Christian life as double agency discourse**

The presence of the kingdom presents God as the speaker and doer in terms of a divine speech act which entails the idea that God constantly communicates with humankind in human language through Scripture in everyday life. Wolterstorff<sup>164</sup> proposes an authorial-discourse model that focuses on certain illocutionary acts according to the particular intention in what was done with words that authors communicate to the reader through a text.<sup>165</sup> In this sense,

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<sup>164</sup> Wolterstorff has applied SAT to facilitate a more practical understanding of Scripture that God speaks to us through Scripture. "Why Animals Don't Speak" in *Faith and Philosophy* 4 (1987), pp. 463-485; idem, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); idem, "The Promise of Speech-Act Theory for Biblical Interpretation" in: CG Bartholomew, Colin JD Greene and Karl Möller (eds.), in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation*. Vol. 2 (Grand Rapid, Mich.: Zondervan, 2001), pp. 73-90; idem, "True Words" in: Alan G. Padgett and Patrick R. Keifert (eds.). *But Is It All True?* (Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 34-48.

<sup>165</sup> Wolterstorff (1995:13) writes that, "Once illocutionary acts are thus distinguished from locutionary acts, then it immediately occurs to one that though of course such actions as asking, asserting, commanding, and promising, can be performed by way of uttering or inscribing sentences, they can be performed in many other ways as well... Even more interesting: one can tell somebody something by deputizing someone else to speak on one's behalf. In short, contemporary speech-action theory opens up the possibility of a whole new way of thinking about God speaking: perhaps the attribution of speech to God by Jews, Christians... should be understood as the attribution to God of illocutionary actions, leaving it open how God performs those actions."

the reader should try to discover what the author really intended at the locutionary level of the text as a communicative act between them. In the context of the biblical text, this author-centred model, as opposed to a textual-sense method, offers to bridge the gap between the human locutionary act and revelatory illocutionary act. It means that the Bible written by humans contains both a human aspect as locutions and divine discourse as illocutions which refer to a dual divine-human agency that helps humans to communicate with the divine. How then could God speak through the Scripture from the perspective of its human authors? How can the Scripture be regarded as true? How it is possible for a hearer to determine what God meant to say? In response to these questions, Wolterstorff suggests a “*double-agency discourse*”<sup>166</sup> *wherein one person, namely a biblical author, says something with words as a locutionary level that is used by God to perform an illocutionary act according to its force.* Wolterstorff (2001:83) therefore explores speech act theory as an alternative way of support his notion of “double-agency discourse”:

Speech-act theory... enables us to understand Scripture as the manifestation of God speaking by way of human beings speaking, and then of interpreting accordingly... It enables us to understand Scripture as the manifestation of God having performing illocutionary acts by way of human beings having performed locutionary and illocutionary acts, and then of interpreting according by the employment of a double hermeneutic.

Wolterstorff’s use of the double agency discourse as the mode of communication is a person’s performance of an illocutionary act by means of another person performing a locutionary act. In a double agency discourse, one person *A* authorizes or delegates another person *B* to speak in order to deliver his/her specific message (intention) to someone *C* on his/her behalf, using his/her name and referring to *A*’s authority and position. It does not simply indicate that the authorized agent *B* from *A* conveys *A*’s message to *C* as a communicative act. Rather *A* him/herself communicates with *C* by means of the speech of *A*’s deputized agent *B*. On this issue, Wolterstorff (1995:42) writes:

It should be noted that to deputize to someone else some authority that one has in one’s own person is not to surrender that authority and hand it over to that other person; it is to bring it about that one exercises that authority by way of actions performed by that other person acting

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<sup>166</sup> Wolterstorff (2001:83) points out that, “What I have in mind is those cases in which one person performs some illocutionary act by way of another person performing either some locutionary or some illocutionary act.” This point helps us to understand Scripture as the manifestation of God speaking by way of human language.

as one's deputy.

Overall, a successful communication entails the performance of illocutionary acts which contain an asserted proposition  $p$ , that is, what is said. However, in the context of a double agency discourse, one person says something (proposition  $p$ ) with words which he/she has not uttered or inscribed personally (Wolterstorff 1995:38). One person (A) executes a speech act by means of words without uttering or inscribing those words. For example,<sup>167</sup> if a secretary writes a letter on behalf of his/her manager to a buyer, that document is regarded as an illocutionary act by the manager in relation to its purpose. The letter becomes a medium of the manager's own discourse if the manager signed it (or the manager can ask the secretary to sign it for him/her), even though the manager never spoke to the buyer or wrote the letter himself/herself. How can this be? The manager, as an effective speaker/doer, empowers the secretary to write a letter to a buyer on his/her behalf which the manager signs, thereby showing that *what the secretary says at a locutionary level counts as the manager's illocutionary act, that is, the letter written by the secretary carries equal authority as the manager's own communication*. In such a *double agency discourse*, *one person's locutionary act serves as another person's illocutionary act since the one person has been deputized to speak on behalf of the other*. If following the order of the manager the secretary writes, "As you know, I have sent a Debit Note to you. If you do not respond appropriately to it as soon as possible, I will prepare to go to court". The note will count as the manager's illocutionary act and as a warning. The warning is the manager's communicative act (illocutionary act), not the secretary's, even though it is the secretary who has written the document that is regarded as a warning. Moreover, the manager does not need to dictate or indicate all the words of the message or the content of the letter to the secretary in order to communicate with a buyer. Rather, the secretary, knowing the intention of the manager who does not need to spell out everything in words, renders the letter as an effective medium of the manager's discourse as an illocutionary act according to its intentionality to a buyer. It is not simply the secretary's letter at the locutionary level. What the secretary says counts as the manager's illocutionary act. The double agency discourse can be illustrated as follows:

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<sup>167</sup> I have used and developed Wolterstorff's example of double agency discourse.

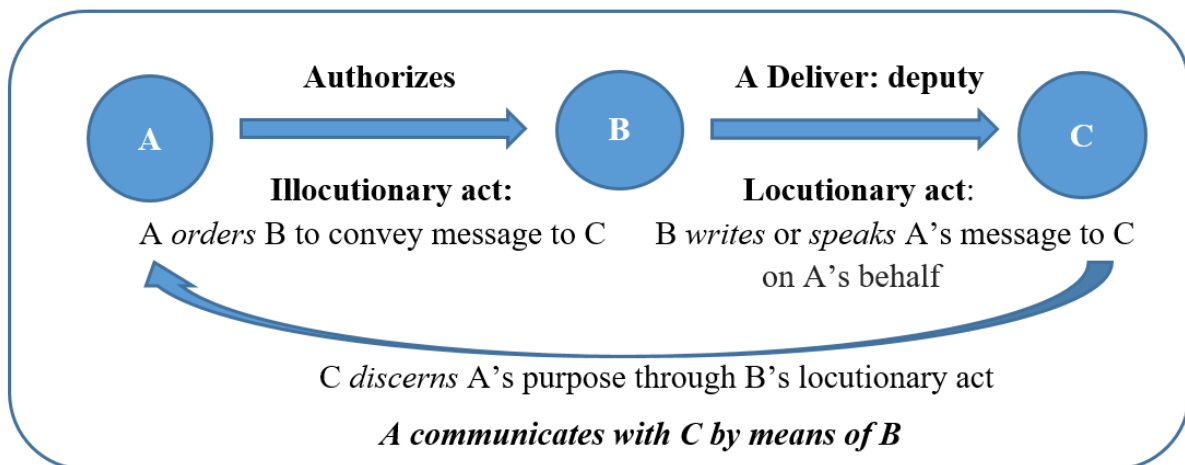


Diagram 8: The double agency discourse

On the other hand, the manager might dispatch the secretary as a negotiator who speaks on behalf of the head of the company. When the manager authorizes the secretary as a negotiator to speak in his/her name, the manager as the real speaker takes responsibilities for having issued the warning or promise in the conversation between the negotiator and the buyer which contains the implication that the negotiator only acts as the deputy on the manager's behalf. Thus, "the deputy has, as it were, power of attorney" (Wolterstorff 1995:44). In this situation, the buyer encounters not simply the locutionary acts of the negotiator, but the manager's illocutionary acts performed by the negotiator. The manager performs illocutionary acts through the negotiator's locutionary acts. At this point, we are faced with a curious point: in the speech between the negotiator and the buyer, does the negotiator (*ambassador*) perform illocutionary acts through his/her locutionary acts, that is, does the negotiator engage in the discourse in his/hers own voice? Wolterstorff's (1995:45) answer to this question claims that:

It might sometimes be the case that the very same utterings count both as the performance of speech actions by the ambassador and as the performance of speech actions by his head of state; these might be the very same speech actions, or somewhat different. Probably the most common occurrence, though, is that in the course of issuing the warning, the ambassador moves back and forth between speaking in the name of his head of state and speaking in his own voice; and sometimes part of what he does when speaking in his own voice consists of communicating a message from his head of state.

From this perspective, we can confirm that the Scriptures written in human words count as

divine words (in a representative illocutionary form). As the example of an ambassador shows, a prophet or biblical author could also be authorized by God to speak in God's name and communicate a message as God's illocutionary act. This means that sometimes God appoints a biblical author to present God's intention (Word) to convey messages on God's behalf to people. Certain illocutionary acts that are intrinsic to the locutionary act by a biblical author count as divine speech according to their force. Accordingly, the idea of double agency discourse can help readers of the Bible to see the Scripture as the living Word of God and to interpret it. This is because the locutionary acts written by biblical authors in Scripture contain God's illocutionary force. This view helps us to understand the Word of God as a speech act having divine force.

In essence, the double agency discourse enables us to rethink the presence of the kingdom in the Christian life and in the present world. Even though the Bible was written by human hands and biblical authors proclaim the Word of God (Jesus' teachings) on God's behalf as proxies to the people, the human words count as divine communication, *as God's own discourse* which has power to do something and produce an effect on the hearer/reader when it is revealed. For example, Jesus commands his disciples, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another" (Jn 13:34), "Teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:20). Then, one of Jesus' disciples, John, as a deputy of Jesus writes a letter to the people of God which says, "I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new commandment" (1 Jn 2:7-8). Again, it says, "For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 Jn 3:8). The words of John follow the commands of Jesus at the locutionary level, but the words also constitute a performative act as an illocutionary act based on the utterance of Jesus (*Jesus' own discourse*). This implies that the simple utterance by John as a locutionary act can be seen as the presence of the kingdom (words of Jesus, Jesus himself) since in the present he proclaims the words of Jesus to the people on Jesus' behalf in accordance with the language force across the time and place.



The human locutionary acts in John's writing<sup>168</sup> depend on Jesus' divine illocutionary acts which refer to the presence of the kingdom at the same time. In this sense, the author(s) of the Johannine literature, who are human authors mandated to present Jesus' message to the people of God, are deputies of God who is the primary communicator. In addition, its illocutionary energy and its intention are continuously being echoed (beyond the historical period of the deputised authors) as a reality in the present world, and it is up to the reader (hearer) to respond to the divine illocutionary act. Jesus' divine force according to the illocutionary acts empowered John's proclamation as John presented Jesus' teaching that we should love one another. This means that John was authorized to speak the message of Jesus to the intended readers, and by virtue of the canon of scripture, it could be argued that it is intended for contemporary readers. Thus, the people (readers) encounter not only the locutionary acts of John but also Jesus' illocutionary acts performed in terms of the presence of the kingdom in ordinary life (*John's locutionary act counts as Jesus' illocutionary act*). This perspective naturally focuses on the *action* of the hearer/reader in a *perlocutionary act* which causes a certain response or effect in the hearer, of persuasion or repentance, that is, through the speaker's illocutionary act in specific ways in contemporary life.

When a reader reads 1 John, for instance, if the reader decides to love others, then the decision is the result of the perlocutionary act which refers to the condition and power of receiving John's utterance. However, it is actually the utterance of Jesus as the outcome of Jesus' illocutionary act. Thus, the double agency discourse as Jesus' illocutionary act in terms of the presence of the kingdom can produce perlocutionary effects on the believer or the believing community in the form of moral human behaviour or an ethical response (*perlocutionary ethical response: PER*) in everyday life. From this viewpoint of the double agency discourse, the Christian life can be understood from the perspective of SAT as the effect of a certain intended divine perlocutionary act. The presence of the kingdom as a divine speech act (God's illocutionary act) represents the medium of encounter with God's illocutionary divine force

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<sup>168</sup> The authorship of the Johannine corpus is a matter of some scholarly debate. It is not possible for this complex and nuanced discussion to be presented in full in this dissertation. The complexity is acknowledged, and the reader is encouraged to take the complexity of authorship into consideration. However, for the sake of communicative ease, the Johannine corpus will be referred to by the collective naming as 'John's writing'.



through the Scriptures written by humans which create norms for the Christian life in the present world. It means that the presence of the kingdom in terms of the double agency discourse refers to what God means to say (intent) and how to respond to the Word of God as Christians from the point made by its human voice. Therefore, the Christian life must be guided by the divine illocutionary act of the Bible in terms of the presence of the kingdom and according to the double agency discourse in ordinary life.

#### **4.5 The Kingdom of God as Divine speech act and three basic Christian Ethical theories according to SAT**

We have noted that in SAT the presence of the kingdom can be seen from the threefold level of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts which correspond to the kingdom of God as a divine speech act in the past (locution level), the present (illocutionary level) and the future (perlocutionary level). The ethical dimensions of the kingdom of God outline the norms for the Christian life in the present. How, then, does the idea relate to the three basic traditional Christian ethical theories in ordinary life, namely virtue, duty and consequence ethics? How do we explain the three basic modes of Christian ethics in a more practical way to discern biblical moral dimensions of the kingdom of God from the perspective of SAT in contemporary life?<sup>169</sup>

It is important to note that ethical theories are made in a social community. Van Til (2012:3) points out that, “we perform moral acts because we were raised in communities that taught us what morality is, and some of these communities are specifically religious.” Moral theories could be approximated through a language-based approach because a certain community or a community’s role and creed rely on human language since it is assumed that “speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behaviour” (Searle 1977:22). Moreover, talking about Christian ethics is performing acts in an actual believing community according to its rules, principles and values according to the features of the language. Nevertheless, recent

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<sup>169</sup> The relationship between the totality of the presence of the kingdom and moral reflection has been highlighted in the previous chapter, and will not be expounded further in the present chapter.

studies seem to be lacking a linguistic approach to Christian ethical theories. Most Christian moral theories are a disciplined reflection on the issues raised by the common Christian faith (language approach or made by language) in the confessing community, but contemporary ethical appropriations are as deeply concerned with the role of the linguistic features of ethical theories (virtue, duty, and consequence ethics).

As scholars have noted, the term ethics is derived from the Greek root *ethos*,<sup>170</sup> which means character (Van Til 2012:4). In Greek philosophy, the word translated as virtue is *arete*, and deontological and teleological ethics derive their names respectively from the Greek words for “duty” and for “goal” in a certain community (Lovin 2000:63).<sup>171</sup> Nonetheless, ethical theories have tended to focus primarily on moral principles in a community, rather than on the linguistic nature in relation to the notion of ethical theory. These trends seem to fail to account for the practical and powerful use of ethical theories in everyday life by not considering linguistic characteristics which relate to the idea of moral theories. The result is a gap between the theories (*what the ethical theory says*) and the real-life situation (*what the ethical theory does*), that is, in the area of praxis. Thus, relating Christian ethics to the presence of the kingdom using SAT implies that the emphasis on the linguistic features could help bridge the gap between “what Christian ethics meant in terms of the kingdom of God” and “what Christian ethics means in terms of the kingdom of God” in Christian living and as an effective moral vision.

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<sup>170</sup> Lovin (2011:9) shows that, “Our English word *ethics* comes from the Greek word *ethos*, which means the customs by which a people guide their behavior. The ancient Greeks used a number of different words for what we would call ‘ethics,’ including some that we might today translate as ‘politics,’ since they considered the ways that communities seek a good life as part of the same subject as the study of the good life for individuals. In Latin translation, *ethos* could be rendered ‘*mos*,’ or ‘*mores*’ (pl.), which give us our English word *morals*. Modern writers sometimes make a distinction between *ethics*, as critical thinking about a way of life, and *morals*, as the ordinary beliefs that people hold about right and wrong before they get around to thinking critically. This is, however, an artificial distinction. *Ethics* and *morals* are interchangeable terms, distinguished only by their respective Greek and Latin origins” (*his italics*).

<sup>171</sup> Lovin (2011:74) further states that, “*Deontology* is a modern term that comes from *deon*, the Greek word for that which is right or necessary, and *logos*, a Greek word frequently used to name the study of something. So *deontology* is originally the study of what is right to do, and later, more specifically, the study of rules or duties. *Teleology* is derived in the same way from *logos* and *telos*, the Greek word for goal. Contrasted with deontology, it means the study of what we ought to aim for, the results we should seek in making moral choices, as opposed to the rules we should follow. *Areteology*, then, is the study of *arête*, Greek for virtue, though the word is a little clumsy to spell or pronounce, and it frequently gives way to the simple *virtue ethics*. Areteology is concerned with the characteristics we must have to be good people” (*his italics*).

Christian ethics has emerged from the general category of ethics and was heavily influenced by different aspects of Greek philosophy (Van Til 2012:13-14). Both Christian ethics and general ethicists are part of the main branches of philosophical inquiry: “what is it that all human beings seek in the world (happiness)?” This question entails other questions such as, “what is the good life?” or “what is justice?”, which elicit answers to the questions: “How do we live in the world?” “What is right?” or “what is the purpose of life?” Closely related questions are: “How can one be a good person by making the right choices and doing the right thing?” or “what makes a truly good human being?” It points to what one ought to do for other people and the world to build a good society together. It is the human decision to do those things that are truly important or of value in order to sustain a common life. In other words, the question of “what is the *good* life?” which means, “what is of *virtue* (*value*) to human beings or human behaviour?” render good and virtue as synonymous, and these are at the centre of morality.

According to Greek philosophy, “good (virtue)”<sup>172</sup> means “exemplifying the corresponding form” (Grenz 1997:66). For example, if we say that a certain grub is “good”, it should be that it exemplifies *grubness*. In other words, if you were a grub, the goal of your life would be to become a butterfly. If something is good, it reflects its form. Thus, since one is a human, one should manifest that *humanness* by becoming a good person. Aristotle (1980:14) claims that, “Human good turns out to be an activity of soul exhibiting excellence (virtue), and if there are more than one excellence, in accordance with the best and most complete.” Aristotle (1962:34)<sup>173</sup> further writes that:

The same causes and the same means that produce any excellence or virtue can also destroy it, and this is also true of every art. It is by playing the harp that men become both good and bad harpists... The same holds true of the virtues: in our transactions with other men it is by action that some become just and others unjust, and it is by acting in the face of danger and by developing the habit of feeling fear or confidence that some become brave men and others

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<sup>172</sup> Notably, “Virtue is the English translation of the Greek *arête*, which means excellence” (Fedler 2006:34).

<sup>173</sup> It has been noted that, “Aristotle’s way of thinking about virtue entered into Christian ethics many centuries later when Thomas Aquinas, the medieval theologian whose great “Summary of Theology” (*Summa Theologiae*) has become one of the basic sources for Roman Catholic thought about theology and ethics, adopted the Aristotelian account of virtue as the starting point for his own thinking on the subject. Virtue, Aquinas said, is a habitus, the perfection of a human power in action” (Lovin 2000:64).

cowards.

Subsequently, the human life is about developing a certain kind of character that is reflected in action which asks, “How does the good person respond?” (Fedler 2006:7). This point is not about “what I ought to do”; rather, it asks, “What kind of person I am going to be?” or “what am I?” These questions are related to human action and the essence of the human being is to be a good person.

Three basic ethical approaches have therefore served as the foundation for Christian ethical theories namely virtue ethics (areteological theories), duty ethics (deontological theories), and consequence ethics (teleological theories).<sup>174</sup> Virtue ethics presents the *character of the actor as the moral agent* and focuses on *what kind of person we are going to be* rather than what we ought to do. On the other hand, duty ethics highlights the *rules (norms) for behaviour as the standard of right and wrong* as well as *the kind of life we ought to live*. It places the stress on rules, so that we choose our goals (good life, virtue) in common and within the limits set by rules, and seek those virtues that make us better at following the rules. Consequence (or utilitarian)<sup>175</sup> ethics points to *the effect or result of an action* which shows *how our lives are*

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<sup>174</sup> The scope of this study does not allow me to situate fully three basic ethical theories (virtue ethics, duty ethics and consequence ethics) within the broader developments and contours of the discourse on general ethics and Christian ethics in philosophy and theories. However, my aim is to show how SAT helps to clarify Christian ethics based on the three basic ethical theories by relating the totality of the kingdom of God in terms of linguistic features in order to offer a new perspective and insight to ethical analysis. However, for clarity, I shall present some main concepts of Christian theories at this point. For more information on the basic ethical theories, see RW Lovin, *Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000:21-79); idem, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goal, Duties, and Virtues* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011:69-233); KD Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics: Biblical Foundations for Morality* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006:3-48); KA Van Til, *The Moral Disciple: An Introduction to Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012:33-156).

<sup>175</sup> In Fedler’s (2006:28) words, “*Consequentialists* contend that actions are to be judged not by some inherent quality but by the consequences that they produce. The main type of consequentialism is called *utilitarianism*. The most important early proponents of utilitarianism were Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). Mill and Bentham argued that actions do not have some inherent quality that makes them moral or immoral. What makes an action right or wrong are the consequences of the action. Those actions that result in good consequences are good, and those that result in bad consequences are bad... Both Bentham and Mill argued that the ultimate good is pleasure or happiness and the ultimate bad is pain or unhappiness. So when deciding between two courses of action, one must perform the action that will result in the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people. One must calculate the benefits to all people that will result from an action and then subtract the harms that will accrue to others and oneself. The action that has the greatest overall ‘utility’ (proportion of good consequences to bad) is the right action” (*his italics*).

*shaped*, and it makes our moral choices dependent on goals (good life, virtue), so that the rules help us to achieve our goals in the human community (Lovin 2000:20-79; Van Til 2012:13). In short, the three basic ethical theories respectively focus on: (1) the moral agent or character, (2) the moral norms, and (3) the consequences that result from human actions (Van Til 2012:14).

Accordingly, we can apply SAT to the three basic ethical theories by considering the kingdom of God as a divine speech act. First, *aspects of virtue ethics can be considered to cohere in terms of the ethical identity of the moral agent through God's locutionary action*. Virtue ethics focuses on the person or community performing the action as the moral agent because human character is reflected in human actions through God at the locutionary level. God's locutionary act is the performance of an act of saying something which presents itself at the level of saying something as a propositional element and which describes some state of affairs, facts or informative fact as God's nature (identity) namely, "*God is love*". It indicates *the content of what God has said in relation to the past* and to the people in the believing community as God's speech act. This consideration naturally addresses the questions: "What I am?" "What kind of person I am going to be?" "What kinds of qualities make me become a good person?"

In the Christian life, the answers to the questions can be found in God's locutionary action, that is, who God is in the Word of God in a confessing community. The Word of God, God's locutionary action as the propositional dimension, contains the information to be communicated between God and the people of God for the sake of the kingdom. In the present world, we only know "who we are" and "what we are going to be" in God because God is Creator, is one, and is love, as God's locutionary action shows. This point implies that, "God who is love is my Lord" or "I am a child of God" in the present life as the formation of moral identity which leads to ethical conduct in which we are constantly in communication with God in communities via God's locutionary action to the people and the world. We might say that this is a certain virtue in the Christian community. Birch and Rasmussen (1989:45) note that:

To belong to a people of God means the formation and transformation of personal moral identity in keeping with the faith identity of the community. This encompasses more than virtue and character formation, but they are indispensable components. Moreover, the

Scripture of the community are a prime medium for moral formation.

Christians who see themselves as God's followers should strive to imitate the image of God (character) as a moral agent having obligation to God and God's kingdom in accordance with the Word of God in ordinary life. It means that in the confession, "God is my Lord" or "I am a child of God", one does commit the person to any future conduct with a particular attitude and purpose towards God's kingdom and human beings in the world by expressing love to God and the people through God's locutionary action.

Virtue<sup>176</sup> is the possibility that one would never give up something and would never eliminate desire or hope in human society. The essential Christian virtue must be love in God because God is love itself which represents the content of what God said to the people of God in relation to the moral identity as an agent. From Israel's history, we see that God has already revealed God's love to the people of Israel through Jesus Christ and God's locutionary act as love. In other words, the presence of the kingdom in terms of God's locutionary action that God is love from a propositional dimension can be seen as [relating to some aspects of](#) Christian virtue ethics – as ethical identity (love) in human character. In Colossians 3:12-14, Paul writes to the believers about Christian virtues:<sup>177</sup>

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness,

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<sup>176</sup> "The Roman Philosopher Cicero (106-43 BCE) is credited with first categorizing four virtues as 'cardinal,' which is a way of saying that these virtues are of the first order of importance. Cicero's cardinal virtues are courage, temperance, justice, wisdom. They regulate other virtues. Courage: How much should I allow fear to shape my actions? Temperance: How much should I satisfy my appetites? Justice: How do I give everyone his/her rightful due? Wisdom: What is the best course of action, all things considered?" (Van Til 2012:68).

<sup>177</sup> Fedler (2006:43) lists the different virtues identified in the New Testament as:

Humility/meekness	Matt.5:5; Col. 3:12; Rom. 12:16
Forgiveness	John 8:1-11; Col. 3:13
Patience	Col. 3:12; Rom 12:12
Hope	Rom.12:12; Heb. 6:19-20
Courage/faith	Luke 8:22-25; 1 Cor. 16:13
Generosity	2 Cor. 8:1-15; 9:6-15
Sympathy/compassion	Col. 3:12; Matt. 14:14
Love	1 Cor. 16:13; Rom. 12:9-10
Truthfulness	Eph. 4:25
Gentleness	Col. 3:8; Phil. 4:5
Kindness	Col. 3:12
Self-control	2 Pet. 1:6
Joy	Gal. 5:12; John 16:12; Phil. 4:4

humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

As the biblical text shows, virtue can be expressed in various forms, but its basic shape is love. According to Fletcher (1997:30),<sup>178</sup> Christian ethics has only one norm which is “love” – *agape* towards God and neighbour. The love of God is the foundation of virtue ethics through which we can live ethical lives with others (how to live, how to realize love) as moral identity in daily life. Christian virtue ethics ~~based on~~ as it relates to SAT can be illustrated with the diagram below:

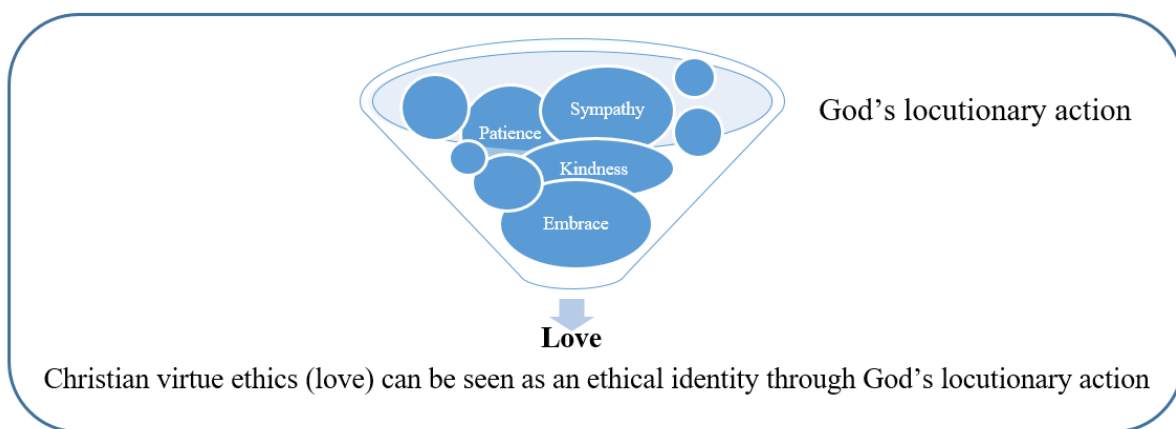


Diagram 9: Christian virtue ethics

Second, aspects of duty ethics can be ~~seen as~~ related to the ethical purpose of the rules of behaviour in Jesus' illocutionary action. Duty ethics stresses rules as a structure for the moral life that certain human actions are inherently right or wrong, showing us the path of life we should choose, and how we ought to live. It is closely linked to the ethical intent that causes one to do what is necessary or required which is what determines whether one is a good person. For Lovin (2000:42), “deontological ethics evaluates actions by asking whether this action was the right thing to do according to a rule, not by assessing what happens as the result of the

<sup>178</sup> Fletcher (1997:30) argues that, “*Christian situation ethics has only one norm or principle or law (call it what you will) that is binding and unexceptionable, always good and right regardless of circumstances. That is ‘love’ – the *agape* of the summary commandment to love God and the neighbor. Everything else without exception, all laws and rules and principles and ideals and norms, are only *contingent*, only valid if they happen to serve love in any situation*” (*his italics*).



action”. Christian duty ethics argues that the duty of Christians is to follow the rules that God has commanded to find out God’s will (ethical purpose) and attain it. Lovin (2000:44) further states that:

Christian thinking that develops a deontological ethics based on the commandments of God as recorded in Scripture is often called a “divine command” ethics. For this way of thinking, the emphasis on God’s commandments is important not just because these rules come from God, but also because there is no other reliable way to know and understand God’s will. Although all Christians would affirm that it is important to seek God’s will for our lives and to live according to our understanding of it, divine command ethics adds to this the claim that the rules set forth in Scripture as God’s commandments are the only way to know what God’s will is.

Specifically, the laws that God has instituted materialized in Jesus Christ, that is, in what Jesus has done in his sayings (Jesus’ illocutionary action) to the people because Jesus lived as the perfect moral example according to the commandment of God and God’s will. Jesus’ illocutionary action relates what one does in saying something in accordance with Jesus’ particular purpose to promise, warn or exhort the hearer to act in a certain way. It counts as a certain kind of action to the believing community – as the Christian norm which tells us the kind of life we ought to live. It shows what Jesus meant in his sayings and what Jesus would do to the people of God at the same time according to Jesus’ intent which God has commanded and which shows the ethical purpose of the moral norms of behaviour for contemporary believers.

To put this point more precisely, *duty ethics, as related to SAT, demonstrates the force of what Jesus says according to the illocutionary actions towards the believer in the present world.* Even though Jesus is no longer bodily on earth, his utterance as a locutionary action is performed as an illocutionary action for today’s believers’ ordinary life. It shows that the utterances of Jesus are ~~a~~ past events but their illocutionary force or energy and their intention are continuously being echoed as a reality in the present. It is up to the believers to respond to the words of Jesus as the norm for the Christian life. Jesus’ illocutionary action creates a new social reality as a pattern of behaviour for the confessing community.

This characteristic of Jesus’ illocutionary action is closely linked to the view of the kingdom



of God (Word of God) in the present as having divine force according to the inherent linguistic power in contemporary believers. It is related to Jesus' utterance and deeds as an event produced with a particular intent which shows that a proposition that God has commanded (e.g. the rule: "Love your neighbour as yourself" which covers the whole range of moral action) is to be taken in our lives as the force of what we do with the words of Jesus. Rules based on duty ethics refer to Jesus' illocutionary action (what Jesus has done in his sayings) for the people.<sup>179</sup> It is neither simply "*p*" nor simply "*F*" but "*F(p)*" which demonstrates the expression of the propositions. The commandment of God becomes a certain action through Jesus' illocutionary force and action as the pattern of behaviour in the believing community, producing a new reality. It is expected to create meaningful deeds in the believer in accordance with God's purpose and will for God's kingdom in the present life.

For example, in John 15:12, the statement, "You must love (*F*) one another as I have loved you (*p*)," can be interpreted as "I love God so then I love a brother or sister" *F(p)* (1 Jn 4:20). The statement evidently contains Jesus' illocutionary action as he has already shown us, and it adopts a stance towards the specific state of affairs according to the words of Jesus at the centre of our lives. Jesus' illocutionary action expressed in the statement, "love one another" *F(p)*, is also active in the believing community where the members have a new status and responsibility in contemporary life. It invites trust as well as devotion and obedience to the Word of God in everyday life as the ethical purpose of the rules of behaviour that are constitutive of the person of faith such as specific ethical conducts in a Christian community. Therefore, duty ethics (moral norms) [could](#) indicates the force of what we do through Jesus' illocutionary action to fulfil God's will and God's kingdom in the present world. Christian duty ethics in SAT is illustrated in the diagram below:

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<sup>179</sup> Fedler (2006:23) asks: "what is the meaning of the rule? We have seen that Jesus tells us to "love our neighbors." But how? What counts as loving our neighbor? Does loving my neighbor mean that I must like my neighbor? Does it mean that I must sacrifice for the good of my neighbor? And if so, how much? Is it loving to provide welfare for neighbors I don't know? ... Can I hurt my neighbor to protect my family or myself? All of these questions involve the meaning of neighbor love (*agape*)... We must ask what the rule actually means." My answer to this question is that the Christian rule (duty ethics) is Jesus' illocutionary action that shows Jesus has loved us according to the commandment of God for the people and the world (cf. Jn 15:12).

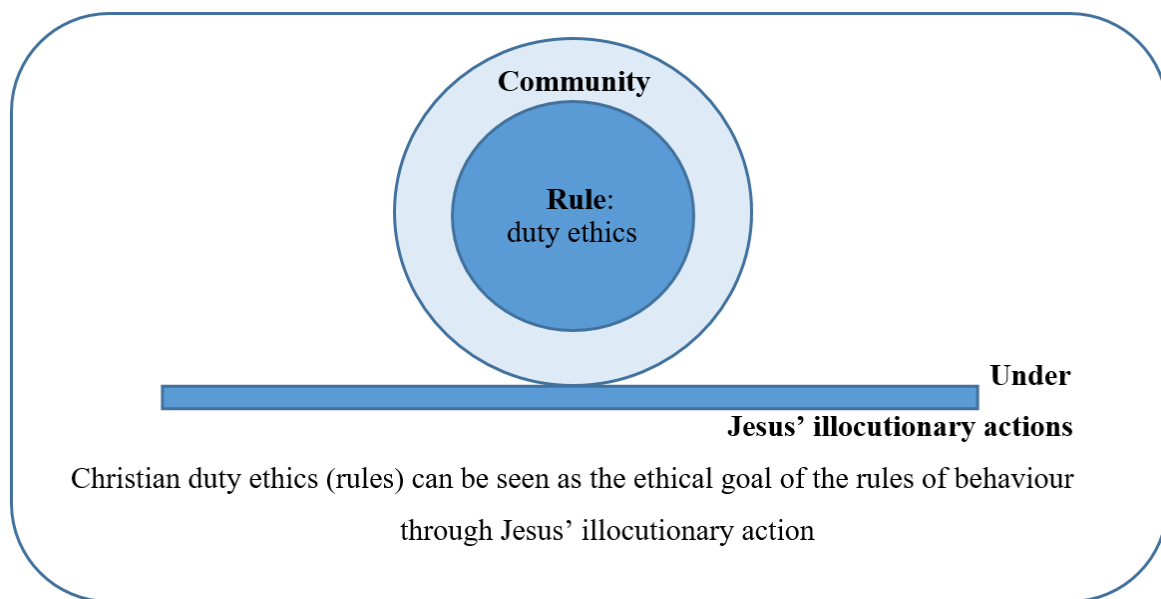
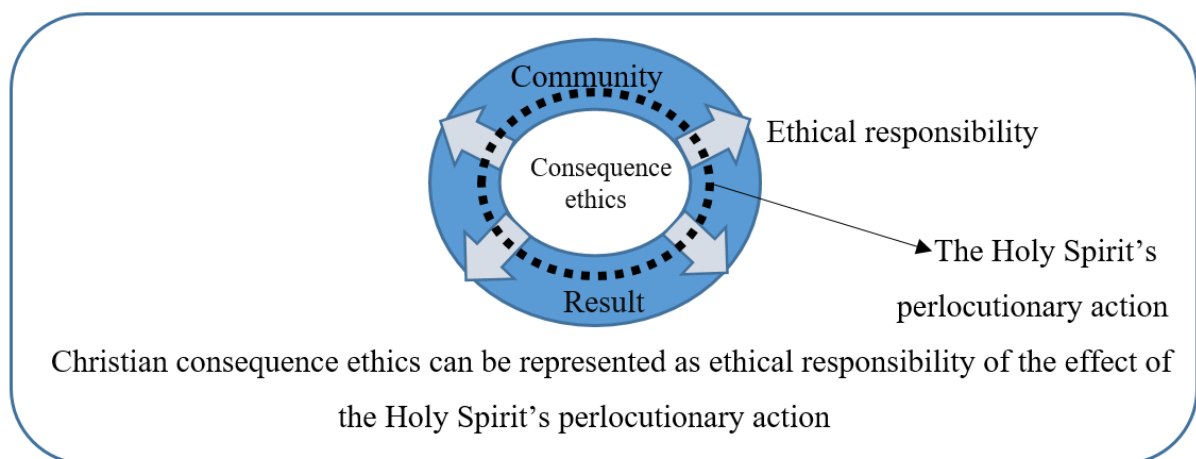


Diagram 10: Christian duty ethics

Third, *aspects of consequence ethics can be represented as the ethical responsibility of the effect of the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action*. Consequence ethics focuses on the effect or outcome of an action which shows how our lives are measured, and aims “to shape our choice and actions in the present around the places we want to be and think we can be in the future” (Lovin 2000:21). Moreover, it uses reason to guide an action in order to achieve a good goal, which means that what makes an action right is that it aims at good results (Lovin 2011:76). In this regard, Christian consequence ethics can be *likened* to the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action based on human action with an ethical responsibility drawn from the Word of God (the kingdom of God) in terms of God's performative action. This is because, “God is acting in all actions upon you. So respond to all actions upon you as you respond to [God's] action” (Niebuhr 1963:126). The result of human action (consequence ethics) depends on the response to the Word of God by the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action which is closely linked to “what one does by it” or to “the effect of action with a responsibility involved in saying something”. It responds to the Word of God (Jesus) according to its illocutionary act as the obtained effect of what God has said to the believers in the commandments.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action creates an outcome for the believer achieved through an illocutionary act which is able to produce an appropriate response with an ethical responsibility. It aims at achieving good results in the believing community in accordance with the Word of God, that is, in line with consequence ethics. Accordingly, the notion of perlocution in *the moral life (ethics)* can be applied-related to consequence ethics to express a future (outcome), that is, what happens as the effect of the Holy Spirit's action on human response as ethical responsibility in the public domain.

For example, in Romans 12:9-10, Paul writes, "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor". When readers read Paul's writing, if they truly encounter the illocutionary act in the text, then, they must love one another with a new responsibility or obligation as an ethical response to the utterance in a specific way and in a real-life situation through the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action. This is because the text refers to the condition for receiving and the power of Paul's utterance – it is the outcome of the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action, and *the ethical response and responsibility (consequence ethics)* are-the-can be related to the effect of the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action. It has to do with the believers' response to the performance of the Word of God through the Holy Spirit. Christian consequence ethics in SAT can be illustrated as follows:



Diagram\_11: Christian consequence ethics

Thus, the three basic Christian ethical theories ~~represent~~ [can be related to](#) the kingdom of God as God's speech act according to the Word of God from the perspective of SAT. This view shows that the Christian moral life is the result of God's speech act to the people of God in terms of the presence of the kingdom of God and for the sake of the kingdom in the confessing community. It demonstrates God's being in a speech act which does not merely exhort the people with God's commandments but also engages in a performative action which is expressed in the contemporary Christian life as virtue, duty, and consequence ethics which relate to the totality of the kingdom as God's locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act, respectively.

From the perspective of SAT, this threefold character of Christian ethics ~~corresponds~~ [can be related](#) to God's performative action as virtue, duty, and consequence ethics. The point is also related to the doctrine of the Trinity and its relationship to our Christian lives as ethical identity, purpose, and responsibility through God's divine speech act in the communicative action between God and the people of God for the sake of the kingdom. In short, [aspects of](#) virtue ethics can be regarded, first, as the ethical identity of the moral agent through God's locutionary action. Second, [aspects of](#) duty ethics can be seen as the ethical purpose of the rules of behaviour through Jesus' illocutionary action. Third, [aspects of](#) consequence ethics can be regarded as the ethical responsibility of the effect of the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action. The ~~relationship~~ [possible coherence](#) between the three basic ethical theories in SAT is illustrated in the diagram below:

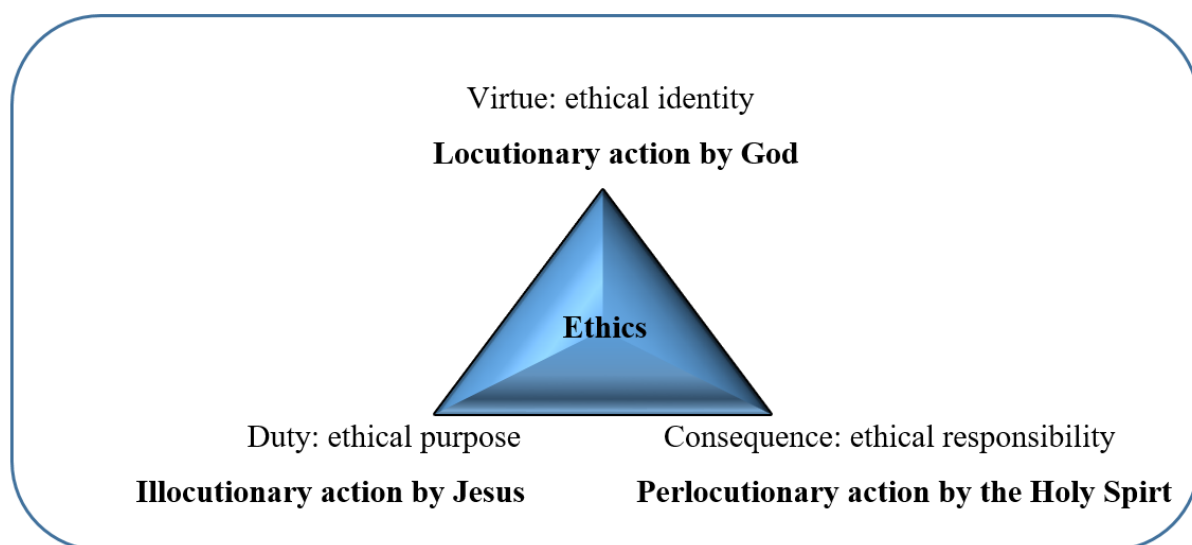


Diagram 12: Christian ethics

## 4.6 Summary and Conclusion of Chapter

This chapter has examined the interface between hermeneutics and Christian ethics in the notion of the kingdom as God's divine speech act by showing that the application of SAT in biblical interpretation could guide Christian ethics and its execution in contemporary life. We have considered the presence of the kingdom and its moral reflection, viz. the ethical approach to the presence of the kingdom as messianic illocutionary force, the presence of the kingdom as divine discourse and its moral effects, and the totality of the kingdom as divine speech act based on three basic Christian ethical theories from the perspective of SAT. This hermeneutic and ethical consideration represents the performance of Christian ethics as a righteous witness to the kingdom of God in the present world. The application of SAT in biblical interpretation offers four essential contributions to each ethical direction relating to the presence of the kingdom.

Firstly, the idea of the kingdom from the perspective of SAT can be viewed not only as three dimensional in God's performative act, namely the kingdom in the past, in the present, and in the future, but it also entails its moral reflection. The presence of the kingdom can be characterized through SAT according to the threefold character of the locutionary, illocutionary

and perlocutionary acts as the presence of the kingdom in the past (locutionary level), the present (illocutionary level) and the future (perlocutionary level), together with their theological and ethical implications for the performance of morality in the present life. The following outline summarizes the basic descriptions of the kingdom and its moral direction from the perspective of SAT on three different levels:

- (1) *The kingdom of God in the past* demonstrates that God has spoken to God's people in a *locutionary act*; it functions as a propositional expression, that is, the information that is communicated between God and the believer for God's kingdom. The locutionary act of the kingdom only points to the propositional elements and the propositional meaning in what God said.
- (2) *The kingdom in the present* refers to the force of what we do as an *illocutionary act* through the inherent linguistic force in accordance with God's purpose, which shows how a proposition is to be taken so that it creates meaning, or meaningful action, according to the Word of God. The intent of God in the specific language act is communicated in the form of an intentional act as the kingdom in the present under the illocutionary act.
- (3) *The kingdom in the future* refers to the effect of a *perlocutionary act* on the believer which could include being persuaded, cautioned or alarmed because of the illocutionary force. The kingdom in the future reacts to the intended effect of what has been said to the believer or the response.

Secondly, the purpose of the kingdom of God is the salvation of God's people, and *the utterances of Jesus can be understood as the messianic language which counts as the illocutionary force in SAT. It is called the messianic illocutionary force (MIF) in the messianic acts.* The propositional content of the kingdom "p" becomes a reality "F(p)" in the present through the illocutionary force "F" according to the specific intent of God – the salvation which is expressed as MIF. In this regard, the sayings of Jesus and his teachings should be seen as performing actions with divine messianic force to execute His messianic purpose for believers in everyday life. Even though the utterance of Jesus is a past event, its illocutionary force or energy and its intentions are continuously being echoed to the believers in the present. It draws

the believer's PER as a response to the words of the Jesus, such as obedience or trust in practical ways through the MIF and its intention.

The utterance of Jesus' messianic purpose can be characterized in the form of a promise  $Pr(p)$ , warning  $W(p)$ , blessing  $B(p)$ , as it already contains the intended action and the effects on the hearer in accordance with the utterance of Jesus in the context of the kingdom of God (cf. Searle 1969:31). In other words, the MIF in the biblical narrative text can be represented as " $F(p)$ ", namely *what Jesus intended to do in his sayings "F"*, and *what Jesus said "p"*. It is neither simply " $p$ " nor simply " $F$ " but " $F(p)$ " which demonstrates that the expression of a proposition " $p$ " becomes a specific action " $F(p)$ " through the illocutionary force and anticipates meaningful deeds in a hearer in obedience to the utterance of Jesus. The MIF in biblical narratives plainly proposes PER as the norm for the Christian life according to the words of Jesus, and it can serve as of the basis for Christian ethics: *Hear and obey the words of Jesus (God) as trust, devotion and obedience based on the confession that "Jesus is the Messiah, my Lord" in the public domain*. These messianic intentions concretise the Christian identity or the norms of Christian life in accordance with the illocutionary force which is represented in practical ways as Christian communal convictions, confessions or creeds.

Thirdly, SAT enables us to understand the presence of the kingdom as a divine discourse with its moral effects. Wolterstorff (1995:19) has employed SAT to explain divine discourse which is not God's revelation but God's speech act, and which also indicates that the fact that "God speaks entails that God exists" (Wolterstorff 1995:95). Moreover, the knowledge about God in the Bible as objective facts only conveys to the reader formal information such as truth or falsehood. However, *God does not only reveal God's self as knowledge about God in the Bible, but also as divine acts such as blessing, promising, warning, exhorting, and so forth to the people of God in order to attain the kingdom of God*.

The Word of God can be expressed as a divine covenant which is closely related to eschatology because it shows us how to live as Christians in the present with future hope in order to accomplish God's kingdom and God's purpose. Biblical language demonstrates a particular

divine purpose, which does something to the believer for the sake of God's kingdom in accordance with the illocutionary force. The illocutionary force also creates a perlocutionary effect on believers as it produces appropriate responses such as trust or obedience, that is PER, or "Christian ethics". Thus, the presence of the kingdom as a divine discourse can be performed in the believing community to create a new social reality through the performed illocutionary force and its perlocutionary effect. Unlike the simple propositional content of the message of the kingdom (locution level), the illocutionary force and its perlocutionary effect create the new world of God's kingdom and fulfil God's kingdom based on God's intention. If believers really encounter the illocutionary point (intent) in God's saying, they should naturally be able to perform perlocutionary responses in their lives. Therefore, *the ethical conception of the kingdom of God is itself "a rule-governed form of behaviour" in God's speech acts such as the value system of righteousness in the Christian community.*

Lastly, the three basic Christian ethical theories [can](#) represent the kingdom of God as God's speech act according to the Word of God respectively from the perspective of SAT. Christian ethical theories [could](#) classify God's performative action into virtue, duty, and consequence ethics in ordinary life. These theories, which [could](#) be characterized through the threefold character of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in SAT, ~~correspond~~ [can be related](#) to virtue ethics (God's locutionary action), duty ethics (Jesus's illocutionary action) and consequence ethics (perlocutionary action). This point shows that Christian moral life is the result of God's speech act to the people of God in terms of the presence of the kingdom of God and for the sake of the kingdom and God's will in the contemporary confessing community. The following outline summarizes the basic descriptions of the Christian ethical theories and their moral reflections from the perspective of SAT on the three different issues:

- (1) Virtue ethics [could](#) be regarded as the ethical identity of the moral agent through God's locutionary action.
- (2) Duty ethics [could](#) be seen as the ethical purpose of the rules of behaviour in Jesus' illocutionary action.
- (3) Consequence ethics [could](#) be viewed as the ethical responsibility from the effect of the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action.



To sum up, the presence of the kingdom can be perceived as God's divine speech act which does not refer only to a propositional theme in the text but rather to a part of God's total speech act which is intended to do something to the Christian in ordinary life. It includes *the meaning of what God said (locutionary act)*, *the force of what God said (illocutionary act)*, and *the response of saying something (perlocutionary act)*. God's utterance is the performance of speech acts which produce in believers certain effects or responses as PER (Christian ethics) in accordance with the Word of God. Therefore, the divine speech act opens up the performance of the ethics of the kingdom according to God's purpose to the people of God in the present world.

In the next chapter, we shall consider an alternative Christian ethical performance theory from the biblical text, based on political reality from the perspective of SAT. This perspective will assist Christian ethical theories in which the moral implication of Scripture based on SAT reintroduces the kingdom of God and the necessary role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ as a renewed ethical understanding of the Christian life. This role of SAT in Christian ethics will offer new ways of thinking about the movement of the theories to the praxis in real-life situations in relation to contemporary moral issues such as human rights. Consequently, the approach could be an alternative criterion through which a Christian replicates a character in the Bible which performed the Scripture under the working of the Holy Spirit for the kingdom of God and God's will in the present world.

## CHAPTER 5

### AN ALTERNATIVE THEORY FOR KINGDOM ETHICAL PERFORMANCE BASED ON THE ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE AND ITS PERLOCUTIONARY EFFECT

#### 5.1 Chapter Introduction

In the previous chapter, we explored the interface between hermeneutics and Christian ethics in the context of the kingdom as God's divine speech act by showing how the application of SAT in biblical interpretation could serve as a guide for Christian ethics and its implementation in ordinary life. The application of SAT in biblical interpretation offers important contributions to Christian moral life in terms of the presence of the kingdom according to the illocutionary force and its intended perlocutionary effect. In this regard, the Christian ethical theory of  $F(p)$  does not simply use the Bible to explicate moral content or themes or suggest how to live as a Christian according to Scripture in practical. Rather, the Christian ethical theory of  $F(p)$  is God's illocutionary action regarding the presence of the kingdom. Such an approach to ethics in relation to SAT refers to God's performative action as the living God at work in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Christians cannot follow the voice of God without the Spirit, which means that a Christian moral theory, or Christian ethical life, cannot be separated from the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit closely relates to moral action to attain the kingdom of God, not simply *as a helper* to do something *for believers* according to Scripture, but *as an agent* who participates actively *in believers*. Thus, the essence of Christian ethics using SAT is about a process of God's self-involving activity through the biblical text in

believers' lives.

The present chapter will investigate the continuity of God's illocutionary action and its perlocutionary effect in the lives of Christians. It will suggest a theory for "the kingdom performance ethics" from the biblical text in relation to a political reality from the perspective of SAT. This ethical performative force is represented through the performative aspect of biblical language whereby the Holy Spirit as a moral agent is able to do something with divine force in the believing community in order to produce Christian morality in the present. Accordingly, the chapter will explore the role of the Holy Spirit (God's illocutionary action) and its intended perlocutionary effect on believers in connection with the God-world relation as divine discourse as well as the place of human rights in the community. The aim is to bridge the gap between "what Christian ethics meant in the Bible" and "what Christian ethics means in real-life situations" by relating contemporary moral issues to God's communicative intent in the Scriptures. More precisely, the divine performative action and its effect on Christian moral life will be considered. The role of SAT in ethics will offer new ways of thinking about the presence of the kingdom of God as God's dynamic and powerful performative action for the world in accordance with God's purpose.

## **5.2 Who is a moral agent in the Christian life? The role of the Holy Spirit**

If Christian ethics is based on the Bible, the Word of God, it must represent God's saving action in the Trinity towards human beings in line with the kingdom of God in the present. This is because the working of the Spirit makes redemption a present reality in the Christian life and the same Holy Spirit leads us to respond properly as moral agents and in accordance with the Word of God (O'Donovan 1986:102-106). As Barth (1936:340) has noted, "God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself through Himself. He reveals Himself." It means that "the life of God Himself turned to us, the Word of God coming to us by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ" (Barth 1957:483); God's self-involving activity (God's illocutionary action) manifests itself through the Holy Spirit. The presence of Jesus in believers as God's saving action is itself a salvation event in ordinary life which also enables the believer to respond properly according

to the Word of God (Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action). The following passage from John 16:13-15 is a good example for the point mentioned above:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

In SAT, to say something is to do something. This suggests that a speaker is not merely uttering sounds when they speak, but performing an action as language itself. Thus, speaking a language is performing speech acts (Searle 1969:16-17), and speaking is a form of action because it communicates the speaker's specific purpose to the hearer. It produces certain effects as a particular response in accordance with the speaker's communication to the hearer (perlocutionary action). In respect of our topic, the Holy Spirit as a divine communicating agent performs an action by saying something in accordance with the Word of God (of Jesus) in order to direct the people of God to God. This is a saving act which has divine force (Jn 16:13-15). This illocutionary action by the Holy Spirit through the utterance not only naturally produces a certain response or effect in believers, it may persuade, frighten or lead to repentance, but also creates the confession, "the Spirit is Jesus Christ" in the believing community which at the same time leads to ethical responses in the present life and in specific ways.

The reason the Holy Spirit works in believers is so that "the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:4). A role of the Holy Spirit is to enable us as children of God to live a Christian moral life in accordance with the Word of God and the purposes of God in our everyday lives. Believers need the guidance of the Holy Spirit to live in obedience to the Word of God; and in order to accomplish this, they need to encounter the Holy Spirit's illocutionary action. The effect of the intended perlocutionary action then manifests in believers at the same time by the Spirit's perlocutionary act, implying that both the role of the Holy Spirit and the characteristics of God's total speech act,  $F(p)$  serve as guidelines for the Christian's moral life. The inherent linguistic characteristics of the speech act are outlined as follows:

- (1) The Holy Spirit and God's total speech act in the  $F(p)$  represent God's intention for the Christian life through Scripture as an intended perlocutionary action (ethical response);
- (2) The Holy Spirit and God's total speech act in the  $F(p)$  dynamically and powerfully participate in the Christian life with illocutionary force in what God is saying to the people of God;
- (3) The Holy Spirit and God's total speech act in the  $F(p)$  continuously perform an action as God's self-involving activity in contemporary Christian life for the sake of the kingdom of God (God's will).

Stated differently, God the Holy Spirit is the performative action in believers that helps them to follow the Word of God according to God's particular intention for human beings. The action empowers Christians (through Christian ethics) to embody Scripture in a way that faithfully witnesses to God's kingdom (the Word of God). A role of the Holy Spirit as God's illocutionary action is to witness to the Bible and to the testimony of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives.<sup>180</sup> Despite the above, most Christian ethical theories do not seem to consider the role of the Holy Spirit as a doer in the believer's life. Previous Christian ethicists regarded the Holy Spirit as just a helper or commander and not a subjective doer in the Christian moral life. For them, Christian ethics is directed towards human behaviour, human beings or moral disciplines rather than to the Holy Spirit as the active agent in the Christian life and the believing community. It appears that Christian ethics has lost its driving force and the goal of keeping the Word of God in real-life situations. Christian ethics has neglected the guiding light of the Holy Spirit that would enable Christians to embody Scripture as witnesses to God's kingdom in the present. However, many Christian ethicists argue that Christian ethics is a thorough application of a Bible-centred and a God-centred ethics. As Barth (1981:18) has noted, "theological ethics is itself dogmatics, not an independent discipline alongside it." Christian ethics should be completely theocentric – our action should be a consistent expression of our beliefs. Therefore, to refine modern ethical theories, Christian ethics should concentrate on the role of the Holy Spirit (God's illocutionary action) as an active and participative agent in Christian ethical living (and the theory that informs it) by observing the illocutionary act in what God is saying through

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<sup>180</sup> See Calvin's *Institutes* 3:1:1, 1:7:5.

Scripture.

In the Christian life, the main driving force behind human conduct is the Holy Spirit and not the good intentions or motives of the people. According to Bruce (1982:251), the fruit of the Spirit is the Christian way of life, “the lifestyle of those who are indwelt and energized by the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit as God’s self-involving activity works in believers, committing and applying God’s divine action for the sake of God’s kingdom and God’s will in human lives. This performative action by God evokes a moral dimension in the believer, a reality based not on the individual’s own effort but on God’s illocutionary action through the Holy Spirit. In other words, Christian ethics does *not* only refer to a pattern of life based on the Bible *as a one-way street* but to God’s active participation in human actions *as a two-way street* between God and humans to fulfil God’s purpose and God’s kingdom. In this sense, the Holy Spirit as *God’s illocutionary action* should be regarded as a moral agent in the Christian life.

In SAT, the focus is on what the speaker is doing when saying something and what effect the act of saying something has on the hearer. If this theory applies to the work of the Holy Spirit in terms of God’s self-involving activity in human life, then, we can say that the *Holy Spirit (God communicating with humanity)* is a *participative actor in human life* because the Holy Spirit supplies the force in saying something. This approach relates the Spirit’s role to the believer (hearer) which is to fulfil God’s (*speaker*) intention under God’s commands or promises to the people of God. Thus, the relationship between the meaning of *what the speaker (Holy Spirit) says* and *the force of what the speaker (Holy Spirit) says* is also implied (cf. Austin 1975:108). The Holy Spirit clearly demonstrates God’s performative action as the commitment of the agent of *God’s people* to achieve God’s promise to them by working within them and faithfully applying God’s divine purpose. Therefore, the Holy Spirit *as a moral agent* is a *participative actor (doer)* with illocutionary force in what God is saying about the Christian moral life and participates actively *in believers* to fulfil the kingdom of God and God’s promise to the people of God in contemporary life.

Thus, Christian ethics from the perspective of SAT is completely theocentric because it stresses the work of the Holy Spirit (God's performative action) with illocutionary force and perlocutionary action (as the outcome of God's self-involving activity) in the life of a Christian. This point can provide insight into certain ethical questions about God's performative action:

- (1) How do we explain God's presence and activity in contemporary Christian life?
- (2) What Christian moral implication emerges from Scripture through the work of the Holy Spirit?
- (3) How is Christian moral purpose developed as a defining ethical decision according to the Word of God?

If the focus of SAT on Christian ethics is correct, the theory must offer a new ethical discriminant in real-life situations. It should explain *how God is present and active through the Holy Spirit in the believers' lives and how the Spirit draws them to God's will by means of an appropriate ethical response to the Word of God*. Stated differently, it should demonstrate that Christian ethics is theocentric because it shows God's illocutionary action and perlocutionary action through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit continuously re-enacts the ethical implications of Scripture in the existing theories of Christian ethics in order to accomplish the purposes of God in creation and humanity.

We can consider for example a possible exposition of Matthew 7:1-6;<sup>181</sup> the theme is "Judging others." Many scholars agree that this passage points to the disciples' kingdom life in relating to others in the confessing community with love and forgiveness and by not judging others (Osborne & Arnold 2010:255-259). Thus, the aim of Jesus' teaching in this biblical passage is to enjoin believers not to judge others, but to love one another. In keeping with this teaching, Christian ethicists should be able to explain what the Christian life entails such as: "why we do not judge others" or "how should we live in order that we do not judge others" and "how do

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<sup>181</sup> This is discussed in detail in section 2.4.4.

we love others.” Thus, we must ask, is Jesus’ illocutionary action of  $F(p)$  and its intended perlocutionary effect in this text intended to ensure a Christian moral life? How can we apply the propositional content in the given passage, “do not judge” and “love others,” to the many complex situations around us? To answer these questions, Christian ethics could apply a SAT approach to acknowledge the presence and activity of God (Holy Spirit) as a reality in the Christian life. Its meaning in the light of the three aforementioned questions will help to uncover a logic in Christian ethics as shown below:<sup>182</sup>

1. *Which constitutive rules and institutional facts govern the given passage?*

Many Jews believed that the moral life meant trying to please God through strict obedience to the law (Schnackenburg 1965:158-159). However, Jesus argued that true obedience to God is also a matter of inward piety, not only outward compliance to the law which may not be genuine obedience to God. This point to the gospel, the message of the kingdom. The Pharisees judged Jesus because he did not follow Jewish traditions, and Jesus was at odds with the Pharisees and the Scribes who always found reasons to attack him. At this point, one should ask, why did Jesus mention pigs, pearls and holy things which are contrasting images in his statements? One point that could be explored is that in Jewish food laws, pigs are unclean animals, and being likened to a pig was a common insult (Arnold 2002:50). On the other hand, pearls and holy things were used as a metaphor for something valuable and precious. These constitutive rules and institutional facts would help to show *what kind of illocutionary action Jesus performed in the speech act in this passage*, and to determine Jesus’ intention (what Jesus wanted to say and do) in his sayings as messages to the Christians.

2. *What does God’s illocutionary action  $F(p)$  of the propositional content in the given passage perform?*

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<sup>182</sup> I have used and revised Duck-Hyun Kim’s hermeneutical questions and insight from the perspective of SAT to support my idea. See Duck-Hyun Kim, “Reframing the Hermeneutical Question as Part of Its Homiletical Responsibility: Making Extensive Use of the Speech Act Theory” in *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society*, 16 (2016), pp.40. See also Duck-Hyun Kim’s PhD Thesis, “*The Homiletical Appropriation of Biblical Passages in the Light of Speech Act Theory: Preaching as a Performance of the Biblical Text*” (Stellenbosch University Ph. D Thesis, 2014:91-94).



This biblical passage of Matthew 7:1-6 is part of the Sermon on the Mount. It has to do with Christian moral life, but that is not all that it is about, or the whole purpose of Jesus' Sermon. Jesus' aim was to proclaim the kingdom of God (as Gospel) by declaring himself as the Messiah (the son of God and Lord of all creation), or implying this in his deeds and sayings (Matera 2013:12). Thus, to discover a possible meaning in the text that would produce a certain response in terms of the words of Jesus (who is God), we must consider the illocutionary force in Jesus' speech. This is because the speaker's particular intention creates the meaning of the text, and this meaning gets the hearer to do something by recognizing the speaker's purpose. Furthermore, the speaker's intention is always closely linked to their authority in the state of affairs.

A central proposition in this text is "do not judge" (*judgement*) (Mt 7:1). From the perspective of SAT, this utterance by Jesus can be seen as an illocutionary act of a warning " $W(p)$ " to the hypocrites (v.5). The proposition, "judgement", counts as a warning " $W(p)$ " (*judgement*). Jesus' illocutionary force  $F(p)$  presents what Jesus really wants to say and do in speech which could produce a fresh work of the Holy Spirit in the hearer according to Jesus' particular purpose as a performative act. Jesus' specific intention and the inherent linguistic force could cause the hearer to react to the performative aspects of the biblical word of *warning* (illocutionary force) to do something through the intended effect produced by Jesus' sayings. This consideration highlights God's active participation in human action and life for the sake of the kingdom of God.

### *3. How does God's illocutionary force $F(p)$ in the given passage perform perlocutionary action by the Holy Spirit in the Christian life for the sake of the kingdom of God?*

In this passage, the proposition at locutionary level is "do not judge", but this is not the totality of the meaning of the text, and it has no power to do something to the hearer or cause a particular effect (cf. Searle 1969:31). In SAT, if we discover the meaning of the text and its force (purpose), we must pay attention to Jesus' illocutionary action (force) and its directional nature. The illocutionary force creates the perlocutionary act through the hearer's response to the speaker's utterance which has the effect of persuasion, request, and repentance on the hearer.

This perlocutionary act influences the hearer which is achieved by an illocutionary act. In this sense, Jesus' illocutionary act produces the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action when the hearers hear the sayings of Jesus. If they change their minds and follow God's way, then, the result of the perlocutionary act indicates the power of receiving Jesus' utterance – it is God the Holy Spirit as the outcome of God's performative (participative) action at work within them that achieves this. We must carefully ask, is Jesus' illocutionary force in this text as well as its propositional meaning intended to ensure moral lessons not to judge as a message of warning to the hypocrites in the confessing community? What is the Spirit's teleological intent through the perlocutionary action? How is the Holy Spirit present and active in the believers to achieve the Word of God (God's intention) for the kingdom of God? In other words, *how does God's illocutionary force  $F(p)$  in the given passage perform a perlocutionary action by the Holy Spirit in the Christian life for the sake of the kingdom of God?*

The “warning  $W(p: \text{Judgement})$ ” counts as God's divine Word which is closely linked to the Messiah, the Judge (cf. Isa 42:4; Jn 5:22), Jesus who comes at the end of the age is the ultimate Judge (v.1). Jesus presented himself as Messiah and Judge through the symbolic term  $\rho\acute{\eta}\xi\omega\sigma\iota\nu$  (maul) in verse 6. The divine communication, expressed in language of warning ( $\rho\acute{\eta}\xi\omega\sigma\iota\nu$ ), refers to the notion of judgement on the Last Day, eschatologically, which has power to do something to the hearer according to the speaker's illocutionary action and force. It has implications for the kingdom of God as a moral response in the contemporary life. In verse 6, Jesus executes his purpose in the warning of judgment to the hearers with the parable that talks about the log in their eye. He tries to convince them that dogs and swine (the hypocrites, who are the Pharisees and the Scribes who treated Jesus as a disgusting dog) will maul them because  $\rho\acute{\eta}\xi\omega\sigma\iota\nu$  is a messianic word of religious language which is synonymous with the saying that the “new wine will burst ( $\rho\acute{\eta}\xi\epsilon\iota$ ) the old wineskins” (Mk 2:22). This speech act serves to warn the hearers who, unlike the pure in heart, had a fixed attitude towards Jewish law (Pharisees and hypocrites) but ignored the spirit and meaning of the law. Thus, Christians should consider Jesus' illocutionary force  $F(p)$  as a warning to hypocrites that they could face judgment on the last day. This illocutionary act of Jesus will have a different effect of either fear or repentance on the hearers through the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action (the work of the Spirit).

If the aim of the Christian is to seek to be obedient to God and uphold God's will (as understood from the study of the Bible), then, Christian ethics must discover God's illocutionary force as the intended effect in the text to apply it to their lives through the work of the Holy Spirit by God's perlocutionary action. The Christian in the intended perlocutionary effect should ask: *who are the hypocrites?* The question naturally leads us to discover what the response from believers should be in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit that in turn is linked to Jesus' illocutionary force through the intended perlocutionary action to attain God's purpose in the present.

Consequently, Christian ethics seeks the intentionality of God in God's speech acts in Scripture which relates to the moral response in the Christian life as the illocutionary force intended by the Holy Spirit. Christian ethics requires an appropriate moral response through the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action and according to the illocutionary force in the divine speech. This point has to do with the Holy Spirit's dynamic and powerful activity in the Christian life (Christian ethical theory) according to God's illocutionary action which reaches out with power and effect on the lives of believers.

### **5.2.1 How to derive teleological "Ought" from an ontological "Is" - The power of the Holy Spirit**

In the last century, Christian ethics has shown a marked shift in focus from "doing" to "being" (Grenz 1997:202).<sup>183</sup> This could lead to a teleological "ought" from an ontological "is." Ethical paradigms move from "what is (to be)" to "what we ought to do."<sup>184</sup> What then, is the relationship between "ought" and "is"? Does "ought" produce "is" or does "is" produce

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<sup>183</sup> Moral and theological judgment is not just saying something; it also requires doing something and making decisions that are in agreement with our moral convictions and belief in God. This is closely linked to "what we want to be" and "what we want to do" rather than "what ought we to do" (Williams 2001:4).

<sup>184</sup> The scope of this project constrains me from fully situating the evolution of Christian ethics within the broader developments and contours of the discourse. Rather, my aim is to show through SAT how the Holy Spirit works as divine power in the believer's life and how the Spirit as a moral agent is a doer in the believers in terms of "being" and "doing".

“ought”? These questions relate to the value of the human person, which says that the telos of the human person is their ‘good’. The question “who is a good person?” which refers to the question “what is the human value (good)?” precedes the question “what we ought to do”. This ethical consideration could be traced to Aquinas who regarded ethics as the goal of existence in human society. Aquinas (1997:5) argued that, “every agent, by its action, intends an end. For in those things which clearly act for an end, we declare the end to be that towards which the movement of the agent tends.” The purpose of any existing thing is its “good (value).” For example, if something is good, it should reflect a certain telos as its value. Thus, a human being is regarded as a good person according to his/her particular way of manifesting *humanness*. Aquinas tried to bridge the gap in the telos between “being (is)” and “normative justifiability (ought)”. In his view, knowing who I am refers to knowing what kind of person I ought to be which also entails that what I ought to do is based on the purpose of life. Thus, what is of *value (good)* to human beings or human behaviour in a community. In this sense, the basic notion of ethics as “moral philosophy” or “a consideration of the various kinds of questions that arise in thinking about how one ought to live one’s life” is at issue (Glickman 1976:1). Glickman’s (1976:1) says:

We want to know, for example, *which actions are right and which are wrong, which activities and goals are worthwhile and which are not, and which actions and institutions are just and which are unjust*. At the same time, we especially want to find out *how one can justify judgements about what is right, good, worthwhile, or just, and precisely what such judgments mean*. We also want to know how all these various questions are interrelated. These are some of the main issues of moral philosophy (*my emphasis*).

One cannot separate an “ought” from an “is” in social construction because each contains both fact and value. Fact refers to reality as brute fact (being) and value indicates communal faith as institutional fact (ought) including unseen and seen goals (good) in a certain community. The primary concern then is about what we ought to be (is) and what we ought to do (justification) according to human value and with a certain purpose in a particular community. In this regard, ethics is based on the value judgments in a community. It means that “what we want to be” is of greater importance than “what we ought to do” because moral judgments related to moral obligation can be derived from judgements about the motives or virtues of moral agents in the institutional fact of the community as common values. On this matter, Hume (1874:252) writes that:

Our sense of every kind of virtue is not natural; but that there are some virtues, that produce pleasure and approbation by means of an artifice or contrivance, which arises from the circumstances and necessity of mankind... (*sic*) When we praise any actions, we regard only the motives that produce them... The external performance has no merit... All virtuous actions derive their merit only from virtuous motives.

It shows that the motivation (being) in institutional fact serves as the foundation of conduct (ought) which is closely linked to the ultimate value or good in a certain community. According to Barth (1981:43), the good is obedience to God's command; "The good is a question which is directed to us and which we must answer with our *act*, with an act which for its part is always concrete and *individual*" (Barth 1981:77). In keeping with this, Barth (1981:16) tried to establish a relationship between *being* and *doing* (ought), and *acting* and *existing* because, in his view, human beings exist when they act.

On an ethical level, the tension between "is (to be)" and "ought (ought to be)" can be bridged by knowing "what we are (being)" because knowing what we are leads to what we ought to do (doing) (Hauerwas 1983:22-23). Hauerwas (1983:22) adds that the question, "What ought I to be?" entails the question "What ought I to do?" This question of what I ought to do is actually about what I am or ought to be. For example, "Should I or should I not have an abortion?" is not just a question about an "act" but about what kind of person I am going to be, what kind of person I was or what kind of life I had (Hauerwas 1983:117). It has to do with the question of "What constitutes a good person (being)?" rather than "What constitutes a good action (ought)?" This point focuses more on the "being" rather than merely on the "conduct". In the same vein, the question "Who is my neighbour?" refers to a concrete action as a teleological approach to "What I ought to do". One must determine the boundary line in order to be obedient in a practical way, that is, one has to love or do something for one's neighbour as justification. This consideration leads to a restriction on behaviour depending on the limit that has already been set which means that one is only available for a certain action within the outline of what constitutes the term "my neighbour".

On the other hand, the question "To whom can I be a neighbour?" presents an ontological approach to the question "Who am I?" It does not need to draw limits for the action of another

person. One can approach a stranger and do something for him or her as an active participant in his or her space, which means one can become a neighbour to everyone since there is no limitation to the scope of who a neighbour is or a restriction on his or her behaviour. This also means that if one can do anything for one's neighbour one opens the possibility of becoming a neighbour to all. As this example indicates, the ontological approach would be a good starting point towards determining ethical guidelines for concrete actions in real-life situations.

Accordingly, "is" precedes "ought;" and if this is so, "a being" must have an "ought (justification)" to do something which simultaneously implies "*ability*" (*energy*) to do something (ought) and to be (is). Where then does this ability to do something stem from? From the Christian moral viewpoint, the ability (power) to do any good thing comes from the Holy Spirit (triune God) and not primarily from human beings. The Christian life is about "walking in the Holy Spirit" (Gal 5:16), that is, it is the life that is drawn by the Spirit to God's way. The indwelling Holy Spirit in the believer becomes the doer as an agent of the Christian life of integrity according to the Word of God and God's purpose for the kingdom of God and the people of God. What then is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Scripture in the construction of Christian life? The Bible shows that the task of creating a Christian moral life lies with the Holy Spirit, which means that the power of the Spirit is the primary driving force behind human conduct. The Holy Spirit is the energy and ability to do something and to be a Christian under God's commands and God's promise by God's illocutionary force. Paul wrote:

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom 8:3-4).

The power of the Holy Spirit activates the present reality of Christ's redemptive event in our lives and the Spirit prompts our free response as a doer to this new reality (O'Donovan 1986:102,106). Therefore, "*doing*" and "*being*" are no longer about people's own issues but about the performative dimension of the Spirit as divine power in the believers through God's illocutionary force and according to its intended perlocutionary effect. This view could open the possibility for a new approach to the power of the Holy Spirit in Christian ethics regarding the tension between *being* and *justification* which indicates God's self-involving activity in the

people of God for God's purpose.

The power of the Holy Spirit is manifest through God's illocutions such as promises or commitments in the Bible between God and God's people in accordance with God's divine purpose which also entails God's obligation to them. The act of promise brings to light most clearly the commitments and responsibilities of the agents of promise within an inter-subjective public, extra-linguistic world of ethical undertaking and address (Thiselton 2006b:126). The statement "I hereby promise to do A" is a commitment, an illocutionary force which shows the undertaking of an obligation to perform a certain act for the hearer (Searle 1969:58, 60). In the context of a biblical promise, it can be viewed as God's performative action through the power of the Spirit which indicates that when God utters a promise to God's people, God does something to the believers with responsibility and obligation to accomplish the Word of God in the present world.

Believers also must show proper responses as their responsibility to do something in order to keep the Word of God through God's illocutionary force. That is to say, "The Spirit convicts us that the Bible contains God's dynamic illocutions and enables us to respond prayerfully to them as we ought" (Vanhoozer 1997:156). For example, in John 14:26, Jesus declares, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you." The declaration is not simply a statement "*p*", but rather it refers to the making of a promise "*F(p)*" as *Pr(p)*, which points to the Spirit in Jesus doing something for the hearer. It also implies that the hearer does something by the power of the Spirit in accordance with the Word of God (as revealed in the Bible) (cf. 2 Tim 1:14).<sup>185</sup> In the context of a promise of Scripture, the Words must embody a future action through the Holy Spirit as God's illocutionary action and according to its intended perlocutionary effect. It also must contain the veracity of Jesus' utterance to the believer which entails God's self-devotion and responsibility as performative action by the Spirit who is

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<sup>185</sup> Paul told Timothy to, "Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us" (2 Tim 1:14).

committed to do something in terms of fulfilling a promise in the present and God's ability to do something.

In the case of speech acts performed in a believer by the power of the Holy Spirit, the norms of the Christian life as well as the utterance and its expressions under certain conditions constitute the making of a promise to the believing community according to the Word of God. God's promise to God's people through the Holy Spirit as God's illocutionary force and according to its intended perlocutionary action imply God's particular intention and behaviour as moral conduct in the believers' lives in practical ways. The power of the Holy Spirit in the context of a promise as the primary content of divine illocutionary action bridges the gap between *what is*, *what will be* and *what ought to be done* in the present. Therefore, in *Christian ethics*, "*being (is)*" is a "*will be*" with an "*ought*" by the power of the Holy Spirit as illocutionary force according to its intended perlocutionary effect on the Christian life and in the context of God's promise as divine performative action that would realise the communicative intent of the Word of God in contemporary life.

### **5.2.2 The work of the Holy Spirit and Co-operative Social Participation (CSP)**

According to Barth (1977:175), "The being of man is an answer, or more precisely, a being lived in the act of answering the Word of God." It means that human beings must react to God's illocutionary force according to its intended perlocutionary effect through the work of the Holy Spirit in believers which shapes or transforms the ethical lives of believers in the present world in order to achieve God's purpose and God's kingdom. This point leads us as Christians with a social responsibility to participate in the world in response to God's illocutionary action (Holy Spirit) as the commandment of God for the people of God and the world. In other words, "only through the continuing Spirit of Christ [that] we discover the will of God for us in solving the moral issues of our time" as we engage in social transformation according to the Word of God (Barnette 1961:95). Thus, social participation in the world is an essential task for Christians. As Gutiérrez (1988:116) affirms, it is "the only way to have a true encounter with God" in everyday life. Believers can encounter God in and through their neighbour (stranger), and such



an encounter unites us with God in a real way as it also unites us with God's cause in the world (Gutiérrez 1988:118). The Holy Spirit as the presence of God invites believers to love their neighbour according to the commandment of God, and the Spirit becomes the divine facilitator of God's kingdom reality by working in them as an advocate of justice and human rights in contemporary life (Stassen 2012:110-112).

Again, the work of the Holy Spirit as God's illocutionary force according to its intended perlocutionary effect can be seen as God's self-involving activity in the believers' lives. The Word of God has exercitive force which implies promissory acts (commissive, directives) in many biblical texts. It shows that God does something with a particular intention for God's people and God's kingdom. Scripture contains the mutual commitment to do something with the implication of intention, action, and attitude between God and the people of God in the context of biblical promises. This means that God as the creator has a *responsibility* to fulfil what God said to the people of God (the creation), but it also requires a proper human *response* to the Word of God in real-life situations with their new status and responsibility to solve contemporary moral problems. We call this phenomenon the "*Co-operative Social Participation* (CSP)" which refers to the "co-operative action between God and humans" in everyday life.

*Believers have a social responsibility to act according to God's illocutionary action for the sake of God's kingdom and God's will.* The CSP is a perlocutionary action through God's illocutionary force which performs God's self-involving pneumatological activity. It produces specific responses such as trust, sacrifice, devotion, obedience to, and tolerance of, the Word of God in the public domain. It also demonstrates that the intention of the illocutionary force in the Word of God bestows a certain responsibility and commitment on the believer such as moral conduct following the illocutionary action according to the intended perlocutionary effect in daily life. It produces the future effects of present actions of a Christian in relation to various social problems and in accordance with the God's illocutionary action as God's self-involving activity. The definition of "*Co-operative Social Participation* (CSP)" as God's illocutionary force according to its intended perlocutionary effect on the Christian life and in

terms of social action in SAT can be illustrated in the diagram below:

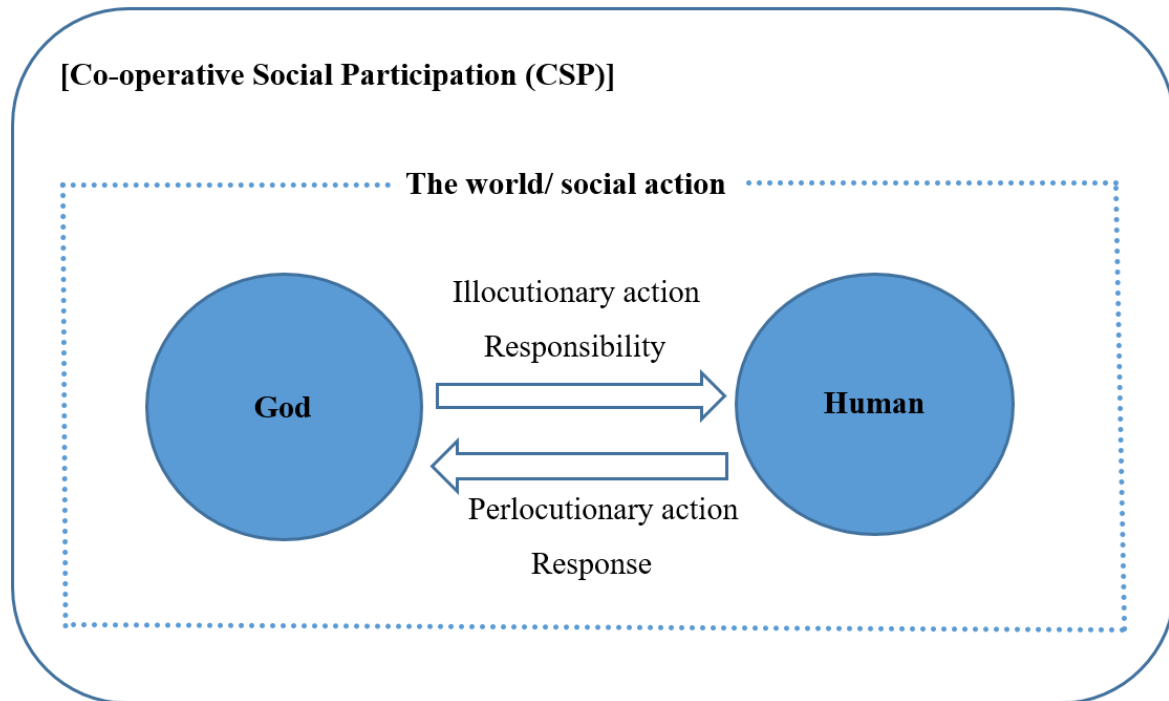


Diagram 13: Co-operative social participation (CSP)

At this point, the CSP in SAT should be understood as the effect of a certain intended and divine perlocutionary effect through the illocutionary force (action) of the Holy Spirit (God). The CSP is the perlocutionary action by the Holy Spirit towards believers which is the process of inferring the intended outcome of a sequence of divine illocutionary acts. Moreover, it enjoins Christians to participate in social issues through God's illocutionary force and according to its intended perlocutionary effect in order to fulfil the kingdom and God's will as God's ways in the public discourse. On this pneumatological principle (CSP), and in terms of a mutual social acts, three appropriate conditions are proposed which regulate moral interactions that are expected to be in force when any social action takes place by believers through God's illocutionary action. These are:

*(1) The performative act*

- The Holy Spirit is the agent of the performative act through God's illocutionary force according to its intended perlocutionary effect in the people of God, and believers also engage in performative actions regarding various contemporary social issues through the activity of the Holy Spirit as a specific action.
- The contribution should be a performative act as required in public discourse. "*Be active*"

*(2) The interactive act*

- The Holy Spirit performs a perlocutionary action in believers through God's illocutionary action which prompts certain appropriate actions according to God's illocutionary force such as sacrifice, devotion and tolerance as a means of engaging moral issues of our time in the public domain.
- The contribution should be a mutual interaction with God's illocutionary force and according to its intended perlocutionary effect on the believers as the main actors in moral conduct. "*Be interactive*"

*(3) The true and appropriate act*

- God the Holy Spirit through the Word of God is always faithful to carry out the divine responsibility towards the people of God for the sake of the kingdom of God (to keep the Word of God). In response, human beings are urged to give the appropriate response in accordance with God's illocutionary action in the world.
- The contribution should be a true and appropriate response that would fulfil God's will and God's kingdom. It should relate to what God has said to humans, what God has done for them and how it will be accomplished through the people of God in their daily lives. "*Be sincere*"

These conditions for social action from the perspective of SAT show that God and humans engage in a co-operative and interactive act through God's illocutionary force and according to its intended perlocutionary effect on the believers in order to attain the Word of God (kingdom of God) for the people of God and the world. Therefore, one is not alone as an agent of moral conduct in social activities. God also is involved, that is, God and humans cooperate

in social participation in the public realm as agents of good for the establishment of God's kingdom.

How, then, can the world of reality as CSP be transformed? Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:16 about "Salt and Light" is a good illustrative example of how the CSP works through SAT. In Jesus' command, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven", the utterance as directive force urges the hearer to do something as a proper response to the speaker's utterance in their domain of life. At the same time, Jesus' utterances perform an exercitive action in a perlocutionary act which causes a specific effect or action on the hearer to persuade or cause the hearer to repent in response to what Jesus said and did for them as an illocutionary act and according to its intended perlocutionary effect.

The work of God the Holy Spirit becomes the outcome of God's self-involving activity through the illocutionary force. It implies a "world-to-word" fit (Searle 1976:10-16; 1979:10-20) which transforms the world through a future course of action of the speaker, that is, Jesus' promise and action. Jesus spoke to get believers to recognize his intention to produce something in them which demonstrates Jesus' directionality, namely, Jesus's attempt to create a world-to-words direction of fit as a reality in the present world through the illocutionary force. For example,<sup>186</sup> when Jesus *ordered* the people of God to "let your light shine before others" or *promised* that the people would be the salt and light of the world, his aim is to change the world by speaking a language that performs a speech act and not by talking about how things are in the world. Searle explains that, "The order is aimed at causing obedience; the promise is aimed at causing fulfillment... In the cases it is not the aim of the speech act to match an independently existing reality; rather, the aim is to change reality so that it will match the content of the speech act" (Searle 2010:12).<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> I have used and revised Searle's example based on SAT to support my idea. See J R Searle, "*Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization*" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010:11-12).

<sup>187</sup> Searle says, "If I order someone to leave the room or promise to come and visit someone on Wednesday, in those cases I am trying to tell them how things are in the world, but I am trying to change the world by producing a speech act, the aim of which is to cause a change... If I promise to come and see you on Wednesday, the point of the utterance is to bring about a change in reality by creating a reason for me to come and see you on Wednesday

This practical divine phenomenon is the CSP which bridges the gap between *what is (being)* and *what one ought to do and be (how to live as a being)* as Christians in the public discourse. In other words, Christian ethics should be CSP through God's illocutionary force according to its intended perlocutionary effect on the believers. It produces a certain action in Christians to achieve the kingdom of God in public places. From this view point, it should be understood that Christian ethics does not only refer to a pattern of life that is based on the Word of God as a one-way street but also to God's active participation in human actions as a two-way street between God and humans for the sake of the kingdom of God. In this case, *God's self-involving activity* should be seen as CSP and a reality in Christian ethics and its attempts to address the moral issues of contemporary life.

### 5.3 Human Rights

There is some consensus among ethicists that the concept of human rights<sup>188</sup> has to do with

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and thus getting me to keep the promise. If I order you to leave the room, the aim is to try to get you to leave the room by way of obeying my order, to get your behaviour to match the content of the speech act. I say of these that they have the world-to-word direction fit. Their point is to get the world to change to match the content of the speech act" (Searle 2010:11-12).

<sup>188</sup> The scope of this project does not allow me to fully situate the evolution of human rights within the broader developments, history and contours of the discourse. This is not a study seeking to solve or fully deal with the complexity of human rights or human dignity in Christian ethics. However, my aim is to show how human rights or the language of human rights are linked to the kingdom of God in terms of God's total speech act in the Christian's public life from the perspective of SAT and its ethical implications. My research has taken an ethical approach from the beginning, and it considers the possibility that human rights are the most fundamental concepts in dealing with our moral life and with ethical issues in our lives. Traditionally, the issue of ethics has to do with human virtue and the way human rights relate to human virtue. Thus, at this point, a brief look at the relationship between human rights and human dignity will help you understand this research. According to Gewirth (1992:10), "The relations between human dignity and human rights are many and complex, but one relation is primary: human rights are based upon or derivative from human dignity. It is because humans have dignity that they have human rights." Human dignity may be considered as each person's inherent value, claim, and virtue of a society that lays claims to human rights. Ebert and Oduor (2012:45) point out that, "The concept of human dignity is usually associated with the notion that every individual human being has intrinsic worth by virtue of being human, and that this worth entitles him or her to respect from all other human beings." In other words, the belief in human dignity is the foundation for human rights. Wolterstorff (2013:43, 49) explains that, "Having a right to express the relation between oneself and that something to which one has the right...The recognition of rights requires the recognition of ways of being treated that would be a good in our lives. But it requires, in addition, recognition of the worth, the dignity, the estimability of persons and human beings themselves." What then, does human dignity and human rights mean from a Christian point of view? Theologically, human dignity is attributed to the special position which the human being assumes within creation as *imago dei*; it is viewed as reflecting the dignity of God (Bayertz 1996:73). One of the most famous theologians, Moltmann, agrees with the above view that human rights proceed from humans as created in God's image. However, Moltmann's view is slightly different. For him,

what makes humans human (Van der Vyver & Witte 1996:55). The idea is that “a human right<sup>189</sup> is a right that we have simply *by virtue of being human*” (Griffin 2008:16, *my emphasis*). There is no doubt that human rights cannot be established without a human society which serves as the setting for social development and ethical decisions that accommodate the interest and wellbeing of all the people. How then, can human rights be exercised in the public sphere of our lives? How do we establish human rights from the perspective of Christianity? How can human rights be related to the kingdom of God? How do we resolve conflicting issues between human rights and the demands of the kingdom of God? These questions can be addressed based on the assumption that the language of human rights in SAT could be used to reinterpret the idea in terms of its religious meaning and linguistic characteristics in public life.

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*human dignity is God's creational claim on human beings* as the image of God and is expressed in human rights: “The specific task of Christian theology in these matters is grounding fundamental human rights in God's right to – that is, his claim upon – human beings, their human dignity, their fellowship, their rule over the earth, and their future. It is the duty of the Christian faith beyond human rights and duties to stand for the dignity of human beings in their life with God and for God” (Moltmann 1984:21). To elaborate his arguments, Moltmann uses the concept of God's covenant (promise) with the people of God. It demonstrates that God's promise to the individual human requires responsibility for others (including the world) and God. It acknowledges the dignity and rights of others. (Moltmann's response to human dignity refers to humanity in its relationship with both the human and the non-human creation. However, I will not deal with his view about the non-human creation in terms of human dignity because it is beyond the scope of this study). For more information about this, see J Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1984). Since my research focuses on human rights, I will not address human dignity here. I choose to concentrate on human rights in order to discuss problems of social ethics as Christian moral conduct in the rest of the chapter. I will discuss moral issues relating to human rights later. For more information on human rights, see J Griffin, *On Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>189</sup> Holmes (1984:83-84) insists that, “The human rights concept was developed in Roman jurisprudence, especially in the writings of Cicero, and in the Stoic idea of a universal human citizenship. But the Enlightenment in Britain, France and Germany formulated it in modern terms, perhaps most notably English Philosopher John Locke in his *Second Treatise on Civil Government*. It was on these sources that the founding fathers of the United States drew when laying down certain unalienable rights. Human rights were later reaffirmed and extended in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 by the United Nations. Properly understood, however, it is a concept whose inspiration is thoroughly theistic and Christian.” Griffin (2008:1-2) claims in his book “*On Human Rights*” that the concept of human rights traces the idea of a natural right from its origin in the late Middle Ages. This concept was shown as natural laws during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At that time, the original theological notion of rights was gradually dropped. By the end of the Enlightenment, the term human rights emerged and the theological idea of human rights has disappeared: “The term ‘natural right’ (*ius naturale*), in its modern sense of an entitlement that a person has, first appeared in the late Middle Ages. God was thought to have placed in us natural dispositions towards the good, dispositions giving rise to action-guiding precepts. These precepts expressed natural laws, from which natural rights could be derived. The theological content of the idea of a natural rights was abandoned in stages during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when thinkers increasingly accepted that human rights were available to human reason alone, without belief in God. The idea moved out of the library on to the barricades in the eighteenth century with the American and French revolutions, and the French marked the secularization of the concept by changing its name from ‘natural right’ to ‘human rights’ (*les droits de l'homme*). In its secular form at the end of the Enlightenment it was often still thought to be derived from natural law, but natural law by then widely reduced to no more than a moral principle independent of law and convention.”

MacIntyre (1984:67) points out that, “The existence of particular types of social institution or practice is a necessary condition for... a claim to a possession of a right... [to be] an intelligible type of human performance.” It means that effective human rights consist of patterns of behaviour that are articulated within a particular social reality of institutional facts and constitutive rules as the *virtue of being a human being*. In other words, “Each formulation of human rights presupposes that the legal position of the human person with respect to society and the state is determined by something... that they can simply recognize as given and respect as inalienable” (Van der Vyver & Witte 1996:56-57). This point implies that each person who does something for the society has responsibilities and status functions with authority which have deontic powers deriving from an assigned status in public virtue. Searle argues that, “The existence of such rights is intentionality-relative because they are human creations” and “because rights are status functions, it follows immediately that they are intentionality-relative” (Searle 2010:176). For example, if someone is alone on a deserted island (no one else knows this fact), he/she has no status function or human rights on the island because there is no society there. The deserted island is not a society and it does not have any responsibility or obligation to safeguard or enact the rights of the person. Thus, human rights are realized for all people in a society according to social rules and constructions with accompanying duties towards other members of the society. Society also has the obligation to uphold human rights which means that the state will not interfere in the social reality of rules following communal virtue by denying a person his/her rights as a human being.<sup>190</sup> Simply put, ‘A’ *has a right to do or have something with respect to a society which also implies that the society (state) has the obligation to keep A’s rights under the auspices of social constitutional rules.*<sup>191</sup> The relationship between

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<sup>190</sup> Martin and Nickel (1980:166-167) reason that every duty entails a right, and every right a duty. Feinberg (1980:143,148-149) notes in “*The Nature and Value of Rights*” that the so-called “doctrine of the logical correlativity of rights and duties” claims “that (i) all duties entail other people’s rights and (ii) all rights entail other people’s duties... When a person has a legal claim-right to X, it must be the case (i) that he is at liberty in respect to X, i.e. that he has no duty to refrain from or relinquish X, and also (ii) that his liberty is the ground of other people’s duties to grant him X or not to interfere with him in respect to X. Thus, in the sense of claim-rights, it is true by definition that rights logically entail other people’s duties. The paradigmatic examples of such rights are the creditor’s right to be paid a debt by his debtor, and the landowner’s right not to be interfered with by anyone in the exclusive occupancy of his land. The creditor’s right against his debtor, for example, and the debtor’s duty to his creditor, are precisely the same relation seen from two different vantage point, as inextricably linked as the two sides of the same coin.”

<sup>191</sup> When human rights are not equally shared (by virtue of society’s institutional facts and constitutive rules) to



human rights and society is illustrated in the diagram below:

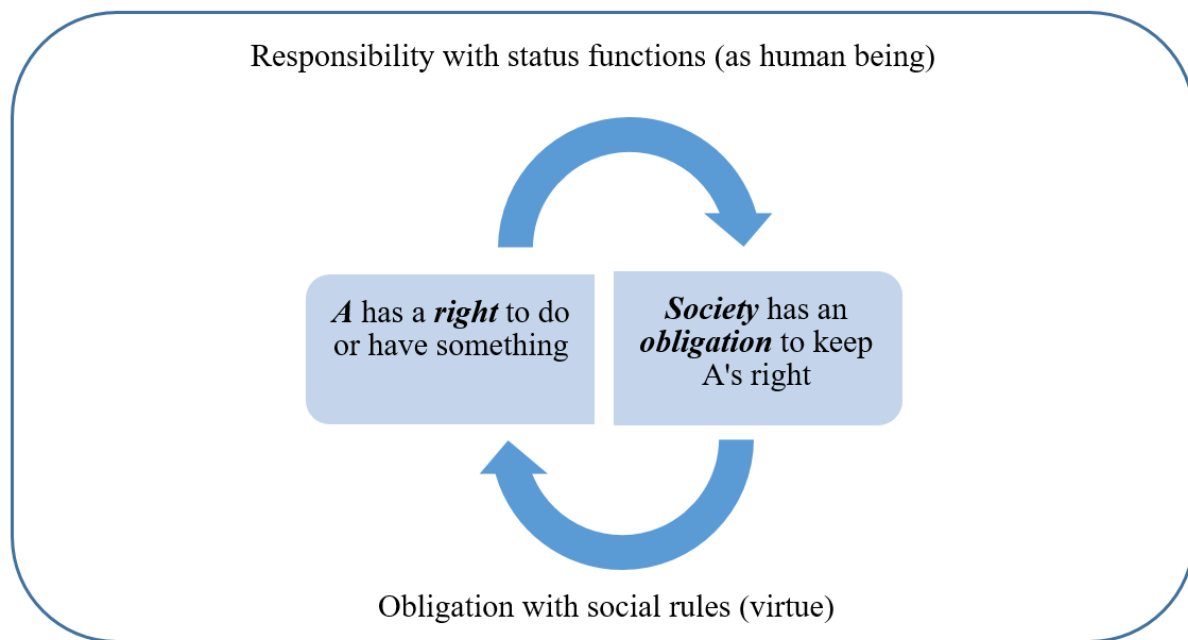


Diagram 14: The relationship between human rights and society

The above diagram illustrates how human rights operate in society. Human rights are founded on institutional facts and constitutive rules which govern human behaviour; the social rules (virtue) are the collective intent of a particular society (cf. Searle 1969:35).<sup>192</sup> The relationship often has the form of “X counts as Y in context C” (Searle 1969:33-35) and it relates to *how we understand human rights and execute them in ordinary life*. For example, human rights can

all people, we call this phenomenon discrimination which violates human rights. Rights must bring proper obligations and responsibilities to social rules; society also has obligations to keep the rights of the people.

<sup>192</sup> According to Brandt (1959:433-436), rights and duties are opposite sides of the same coin, that is, A’s right against B and B’s duty to A. Searle (2010:177-178) also maintains that “rights are always rights against somebody”: “If X has a right against Y, Y has an obligation to X. And what we think of in the United States as basic rights, such as the right of free speech, are usually rights against the government...1. For all x, x has a right R (x does A) implies 2. There is some y such that x has R against y. And that implies 3. Y has an obligation to x to allow [not to interfere with, etc.] (x does A).” However, I do not agree with his definition of rights, but follow McClosely’s (1965:118) explanation that the distinct features of rights are always rights to something, not rights against something: “My right to life is not a right against anyone. It is my right and by virtue of it, it is normally permissible for me to sustain my life in the face of obstacles. It does give rise to rights against others in the sense that others have or may come to have duties to refrain from killing me, but it is essentially a right of mine, not an infinite list of claims, hypothetical and actual, against an infinite number of actual, potential, and as yet non-existent human beings... Similarly, the right of the tennis club member to play on the club courts is a right to play, not a right against some vague group of potential or possible obstructors.”



be defined, in line with Searle's formulation, "X counts as Y in context C", as "*social responsibility or obligation in the context of a certain society's rules*" (cf. Searle 2010:181).<sup>193</sup> Speaking about human rights (the language of human rights),<sup>194</sup> which mirrors social virtue in everyday life, can be counted as a series of constitutive rules in terms of meaning and illocutionary acts which are performed in a certain situation according to these sets of constitutive rules (cf. Searle 1971:42). In this regard, the language of human rights performs a speech act of implied behaviour or commitment that is determined by either non-verbal conduct or verbal conduct. It refers to who I am, or what I ought to do, in the society according to public rules. The language of human rights defines the pattern of behaviour of rights based on the constitutive rules as the illocutionary force. The illocutionary act in the language of human rights<sup>195</sup> as  $F(p)$  in a particular society and its power<sup>196</sup> are executed in a real-life situation which bridges the gap between the notion of human rights and its praxis through illocutionary force. Therefore, human rights are part of speech acts, and their meaning and application in ordinary life can be analysed using linguistic tools.

### 5.3.1 Human Rights as claims

Notably, "It is quite common in moral and legal philosophy to associate rights with claims" (Cronin 1992:27), for "human rights"<sup>197</sup> are a bundle of claims each person has simply because

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<sup>193</sup> Searle's understanding (2010:181) of the relationship between human being and human right is that "in the formula X counts as Y in context C, the Y term is "human being"; so if you qualify as human being, you are automatically guaranteed human rights."

<sup>194</sup> For Searle, "Language is the basic form of public deontology, and I am claiming that in the full sense that involves the public assumption of irreversible obligations, there is no such deontology without language. I am now arguing that once you have language, it is inevitable that you will have deontology because there is no way you can make explicit speech act performed according to the conventions of a language without creating commitments" (Searle 2010:82).

<sup>195</sup> Human rights  $F(p)$  can be seen as claims  $C(p)$  or promises  $Pr(p)$  in a certain society from the perspective of SAT.

<sup>196</sup> Searle (2010:148) points out that, "Power is an ability or capacity, but the exercise of power, as power, is always an intentional act."

<sup>197</sup> According to Newlands (2004:129), "One of the earliest theological discussions of human rights is to be found in Alan Falconer's collection *Understanding Human Rights*. In an essay on 'Christian Faith and Human Rights', Jürgen Moltmann sees the Reformed emphasis as being on human dignity through man's creation in the image of God, the Lutheran emphasis on a correspondence between Christian life in the sphere of faith and human rights in the sphere of the world, and the Roman Catholic emphasis on the analogy between nature and grace, in which grace illuminates the dignity of man in nature. Moltmann identifies another starting point in the experience of

of his or her humanness” (Bucar & Barnett 2005:3). These rights often appear in the form of a language of claims or demands to be exercised in ordinary life according to the virtue of moral sensibility to social rules. The language of human rights has something to do with the language of the activity of claiming. As Austin shows, language can be identified based on a given social construction including culture in terms of performative utterances, that is, speech acts (cf. Austin 1975). All human words take place in a certain context (society) within which certain conditions and conventional expectations operate in order to understand what an utterance is doing with what it is saying, and *not simply as a propositional meaning but as a meaningful action*. It means that having human rights is to do something as a human being in the society. It has to do with performing an action as language itself. The language of human rights, with performative language, seeks to uncover the operation and effects of a language of rights in real-life situations. It implies *how to do things with the language of human rights in everyday life which* clearly refers to human rights is a kind of claim.<sup>198</sup>

Feinberg (1980:149) explains that, “a right is a kind of claim, and a claim is ‘an assertion of right’.” In his article, “The Nature and Value of Rights”, he identifies different forms of claiming based on the use of linguistic features as: (1) making claim to, (2) claiming that..., and (3) having a claim. Feinberg’s classification, using linguistic features, is especially significant here for probing human rights and its execution in ordinary life and it is worth examining in detail.<sup>199</sup>

The first usage is “*making a claim to*.” According to SAT, speaking a language is also a kind of doing; many utterances are performative acts, for instance, “I claim to...” This language is always linked to the question, “who argues?” as the legal position of the speaker. Making a

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humanity, in a liberation theology context. The discussion has been taken forward by Max Stackhouse and others.”

<sup>198</sup> Here, human rights and the language of human rights (or rights) can be regarded as the same.

<sup>199</sup> Feinberg is not alone in arguing that human rights are claims but he is probably one of the well-known scholars on the study of rights from a linguistic viewpoint. He employs the terms, *performative claiming* and *propositional claiming*. These are very similar to Austin’s illocutionary concept of SAT and its character actually lies in the illocutionary force and action. However, he does not talk about SAT, and I cannot find any comment on or reference to any of the mainline SAT theorists when I read this article. Thus, I will consider Feinberg’s main idea from the perspective of SAT, and revise and supplement it in order to support my argument.

claim to something indicates doing something with words in a certain society (circumstances) which is always about conventional relationships in a society of speakers and it is *saying x (with doing)* and *bring about y* according to a particular purpose. It can be coded as: *saying x is counted as y under the factual circumstance z* (see Brümmer 2006:113). Feinberg's (1980:150) illustration of this usage says:

Generally speaking, only the person who has a title or who has qualified for it, or someone speaking in his name, can make claim to something as a matter of right. It is an important fact about rights (or claims), then, that they can be claimed only by those who have them... If Smith owes Jones five dollars, only Jones can claim the five dollars as his own... that is... a legal performance with direct legal consequences. Legally speaking, *making claim to* can itself make things happen. This sense of "claiming," then, might well be called "the performative sense." The legal power to claim (performatively) one's right or the things to which one has a right seems to be essential to the very notion of a right. A right to which one could not make claim (i.e. not even for recognition) would be a very imperfect right indeed! (*his emphasis*).

Feinberg's illustration can be seen as *saying a claim x (making a claim to) is counted as legal performance under social rules*. It means that "*making a claim to*" is the performative act of a speaker's legal position which brings some legal demands to a certain person with the illocutionary action (force) under a particular convention. This performative language of claim has exercitives which relate to the exercise of powers, rights and influence according to contemporary social rules (Austin 1975:150-151). In other words, "making a claim to" as the performative dimension of language entails possible acts which relate to the question, "how can claiming rights be performed in everyday life?" The language of rights as claims therefore bridges the gap between performative language and real-life situations in terms of human action. The illocutionary act of the performative language of claiming rights entails the performance of an act in saying something according to constitutive rules from the speaker's legal position. It is the performative act of producing an utterance with a particular (conventional) illocutionary force (Austin 1975:100). This only takes place within a conventional rule because the illocutionary act serves as institutional force (procedure) influencing what we do in saying something. Therefore, the intent of the speaker who is making a claim to something in the language act is communicated in the form of an intentional act in accordance with the speaker's specific rights to claim from the hearer to act in a certain way through language.

In fact, the speaker's intention (claim) creates illocutionary force which aims to get the hearer

to do something in a certain conventional way. The claim of the speaker produces an illocutionary point which indicates that some illocutions have certain intentions and that the illocutionary act has a clearly associated perlocutionary intent (cf. Searle 1979:3). The illocutionary act is the force of the speaker's claims to do something to the hearer or cause a particular effect. The illocutionary force creates the perlocutionary act through the hearer's response to the speaker's claims. To put it differently, the speaker's claim intends "F(p)" to be both a content of claims "(p)" and the illocutionary force "F" to the hearer in the relationship between the word and the world (cf. Searle 1969:47). For example, the statement, "I claim to do something" F(p), is made under certain social rules to create a social reality in appropriate circumstances. The speaker's claims pertain to the illocutionary point of the communicative action which creates a new reality in the world by urging the hearer to perform a certain action in a real-life situation.

The second usage is "claiming that..." which Feinberg (1980:150) calls "propositional claiming" as opposed to "performative claiming", that is, "making claim to." "Claiming that one has a right is another sort of thing one can do with language, but it is not the sort of doing that characteristically has legal consequences" (Feinberg 1980:150). In short, "claiming that" simply refers to the content of a claim or an assertion of propositional meaning which presents some state of affairs or informative fact as true or false. Feinberg (1980:150) explains that:

I can claim, for example, that you, he, or she has certain rights, or that Julius Caesar once had certain rights; or I can claim that certain statements are true, or that I have certain skills, or accomplishments, or virtually anything at all. I can claim that the earth is flat. What is essential to *claiming that* is the manner of assertion (*his emphasis*).

According to Feinberg, "claiming that" is a propositional claiming; therefore, no legal force can be exercised and it has no legal consequences. We can recall the example by Feinberg (1980:150) mentioned above which says, "If Smith owes Jones five dollars, only Jones can claim the five dollars as his own...". Similarly, Feinberg adds that, "Anyone can claim, of course, that this umbrella is yours, but only you can actually claim the umbrella" (Feinberg 1980:150). For Feinberg, "making a claim" to something has legal force in relation to legal rights, while "claiming that" is a certain content of a claim as a simple informative fact which has no power in everyday life.

Feinberg's view is similar to Austin's locutionary concept in SAT. The locutionary act is the performance of the act of saying something which presents itself as a proposition containing an informative fact that is true or false. This is closely linked to the surface of the utterance in terms of the propositional element or meaning such as vocabulary and grammar which demonstrates what has been said or written. At the locution level, the content of the claim no longer has any influence on the hearer because the locutionary act merely refers to propositional meanings, but it has no power to do something to or have a particular effect on the hearer (cf. Searle 1969:31). Thus, as Feinberg has argued, "claiming that" as propositional claiming has no force that can be exercised.<sup>200</sup>

However, when we consider the word of claim used in everyday life from a language perspective, it is hard to imagine a claim that cannot exercise any power.<sup>201</sup> This implies that the word assertion itself has the power to do something. According to Searle (1968:148), the locutionary and the illocutionary acts cannot be separated from each other because no utterance and its meaning are completely "force-neutral." It means that a propositional act cannot take place alone, as it is always performed together with an illocutionary act, which means every locutionary act has an illocutionary act due to its inherent linguistic nature. Based on the linguistic characteristics, "the illocutionary force indicator shows how the proposition is to be taken" (Searle 1969:30). Therefore, "claiming that" is not only a propositional claiming, it is also a performative claiming that has the power to be exercised because language itself is a performative act.

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<sup>200</sup> If language has any effect on the hearer, the hearer should respond not only on the locutionary level but also on the illocutionary level.

<sup>201</sup> Feinberg (1980:150) insists that, "One can assert without even caring very much whether anyone is listening, but part of the point of propositional claiming is to make sure people listen." For him, the aim of propositional claiming is to pay attention to the people who make the claim. However, attention (listen) is not simply about hearing; the hearer needs to do something such as a specific attitude or action as a proper response to the speaker's saying because of the linguistic features of the word, claim. Thus, Feinberg's argument that the purpose of the assertion is to make sure people listen is obviously contradictory. A better way to say this would be, "*the point of performative claiming is to make sure people listen.*"

The third usage is “having a claim.” Feinberg (1980:151) considers the idea of “having a claim” not in the verb “to claim” but in the substantive “a claim.” It is closely linked to the sense of possessions within a society such as a form of *moral conduct* or *entitlement*.<sup>202</sup> Even though Feinberg does not mention these terms directly, for him, the thought of “having a claim” can be regarded as “having a right”, as a practical synonym which reflects humanism (human dignity):

Even if there are conceivable circumstances in which one would admit rights diffidently, there is no doubt that their characteristic use and that for which they are distinctively well suited, it to be claimed, demanded, affirmed, insisted upon. They are especially sturdy objects to “stand upon,” a most useful sort of moral furniture. Having rights, of course, makes claiming possible; but it is claiming that gives rights their special moral significance. This feature of rights is connected in a way with the customary rhetoric about what it is to be a human being. Having rights enables us to “stand up like men,” to look others in the eye, and to feel in some fundamental way the equal of anyone (Feinberg 1980:151).

Feinberg’s (1980:151) argument is that “having a claim consists in being in a position to claim, that is, to make claim or claim that.”<sup>203</sup> This implies that anyone can make or have a claim, a valid claim as a human being in a society where they belong and have a moral (legal) status. What then makes it possible for one to move from “having a right” to “exercising a right” in our daily lives? Every person has a right to make claims as a human being, but not every person exercises that right. One person may have the power to claim his/her rights while another lacks the power to claim his/her own rights. Where does this distinction come from, that is, one’s *moral power* and moral status according to social rules in a certain society which is able to protect one’s rights or the recognition to claim the rights? For example, by law, most adults *have a right* to vote in a general democratic society and can *exercise that right* as real power or moral force in order to claim the given right and to express their opinions. Even if they are

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<sup>202</sup> McClosky rejects Feinberg’s argument that rights are claims. He insists that rights are entitlements because a right is not a claim in itself. He illustrates his view thus: “My legal right to marry consists primarily in the recognition of my entitlement to marry and to have my act recognised. It indirectly gives rise to claims on others not to prevent me so acting, but it does not primarily consist in these claims” (McClosky 1965:116). However, Wasserstrom (1979:10) regards rights and claims as practically synonymous in the following statement: “Perhaps the most obvious thing to be said about rights is that they are constitutive of the domain of entitlements. They help to define and serve to protect those things concerning which one can make a very special kind of claim- a claim of right.” In fact, McClosky’s view closely follows Feinberg’s notion of having a claim.

<sup>203</sup> Therefore, “If this suggestion is correct it shows the primacy of the verbal over the nominative forms. It links claims to a kind of activity and obviates the temptation to think of claims as things, on the model of coins, pencils, and other material possessions which we can carry in our hip pockets” (Feinberg 1980:151).

physically disabled, they have the right to vote and to exercise that right if they can go to the polls and cast the ballot by themselves. However, people who have been convicted legally cannot vote or exercise their right in this manner in certain societies. Even though they have the physical power to go to the polls and cast their vote, they are deprived of their rights to vote in prison through moral (legal) power. Crowe (1978:4-5) explains the importance of moral power as follows:

A man's right to life can be described as his moral power to claim or demand that no one takes his life away. Normally, of course, a man is able to support this claim by physical force; he may repel an attack, using physical force to fight off his attacker. But we would easily recognize that the ability to fight off an attack is not the basis for his right to life. A champion boxer or a trained commando may be well able to use physical means to defend his life. But a handicapped or otherwise defenceless person, an infant, an old person, one who is paralysed for example, although unable physically to defend himself, has every bit as much a right to life as the strong man. What both the weak and the strong have in common is the moral power (that is the right). And this moral power is far more important than the difference in their physical strength.

Such moral power can be regarded as illocutionary acts  $F(p)$  because it comes from the institutional facts and constitutive rules of society and places one in a position to claim, that is, to engage in a performative act. In other words, moral acts have moral power  $F(p)$  where the variable “F” stands for the illocutionary force and shows devices as values and “p” expresses the content of moral rules in certain social conventions (cf. Searle 1969:31). Moral power implies both the pattern of behaviour and the illocutionary acts such as “a claim”  $C(p)$  which produces meaning or meaningful action of rights in accordance with social rules through illocutionary acts and according to the intended perlocutionary acts. For instance, we can apply moral power (moral illocutionary acts) “ $F(p)$ ” to the case of voting, that is, “We make (F) a claim, that is, *having a claim* to a right to vote (p).” This can be represented as “We have moral power  $F(p)$ ” which from the perspective of secure political voting system is neither simply “p” nor simply “F” but “ $F(p)$ ”. It demonstrates that the expression of a proposition of ethical/political norm becomes a certain action through illocutionary force and that moral power anticipates exercising voting rights as having a claim.

To sum up, although Feinberg recognises different forms of claiming in everyday life, his view of rights as claims actually refers to a kind of “performative claiming” through illocutionary



acts. It means that the language of rights as claims is the performance of an action which shows that speaking a claim ( “*make a claim to something*” or “*claim that*” or “*have a claim*”) implies a performative action that is taken in order to claim rather than a specific state of affairs or set of facts. This linguistic feature of rights as claims in its actual usage in appropriate circumstances reflects non-verbal behaviours behind the use of language in social constructions – how to do things with words when we utter a claim. Thus, a claim as a performative act attains a certain intended effect by the speaker (perlocutionary act) who makes a claim to something through the illocutionary force in the hearer or society. Accordingly, the language of rights as claims shows how rights are ultimately produced in a society, how rights are exercised by one who makes a claim, and what effect it is expected to have beyond simply stating the meaning of rights in real-life situations.

### **5.3.2 Human Rights and the Kingdom of God**

Human rights are realized only in the context of social reality because social reality operates on rules, norms, and customs which bestow duties and responsibilities as well as certain kinds of rights on people to enable them to live a good life. This consideration relates to the question, “What makes a truly good human being in a society?” What then is the correlation between human rights and the kingdom of God? Are rights limited to human societies alone? As we have noted earlier, the kingdom of God refers to God’s reign, as it points directly to God’s self, the Word of God. The Word of God continually works in the believers through the Holy Spirit which is closely linked to the presence of the kingdom of God as a reality in the world. God’s kingdom takes place in the context of human response to life in the present so that human action is connected to the kingdom of God. It does not operate in some removed location, rather it is where we live right now – the present (Wright 1996:202; 2007:25). In other words, *the presence of the kingdom of God can be seen as a social reality in the present life* which implies that it relates to human rights according to the Word of God. It connects with a particular Christian pattern of behaviour that seeks the good and the purpose of being human (humanity or humanness).



According to Guroian (2005:43), “good and the telos of the human being, who is created in the image and likeness of God”, may be considered in order to participate in and be in communion with the Divine Life which implies human rights. Similarly, Wolterstorff (2008:317,350) argues that as the image of God, human nature resembles God’s nature but it also has inherent rights. However, human rights do not arise from human beings as creatures, but from God’s nature as the likeness of God which is found in human nature.<sup>204</sup> The issue of what virtue (value, good and purpose) means to human beings or in human behaviour has to do with the search for the origin of human rights in the image of God as the ethical identity of the moral agent. Hence, it is crucial to see human rights as God’s locutionary action in [relation to aspects of terms of](#) Christian virtue because human rights are reflected in human actions in a society and according to the Word of God at the locutionary level which shows God’s nature of love, since “*God is love*”. God’s locutionary action as God’s nature of love (the image of God) represents the content of what God said to the people of God in relation to the basic moral identity with human rights (human being) as God’s speech act. It means that the love of God is the foundation of human rights through which we can live to realize human virtue with others in the present life.

In this regard, God’s locutionary action leads us to know “who we are” and “how to live,” but, at the same time, it shows that God is love. As children of God, therefore, Christians should resemble the God of love who is central to the formation of human rights as a certain moral identity and specific conduct in the present for people and the kingdom of God through God’s locutionary action. Christians should imitate the image of God at the locutionary level having an obligation and a responsibility to God (God’s kingdom) and others (society), and enjoying the freedom given in God as human beings, that is, human rights. One commits him/herself to moral conduct in order to exercise human rights with a particular attitude and purpose towards God’s kingdom and human beings in the world by expressing love to God and people through

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<sup>204</sup> Many scholars link human rights with the image of God. See Joseph Blank, “The Justice of God as the Humanisation of Man – the Problem of Human Rights in the New Testament”, in A. Muller and N. Greinacher (eds.), *The Church and the Rights of Man*, (New York: Seabury Press 1979:27); Jean-Marie Aubert, “Human Rights: Challenge to the Churches”, *Theology Digest*, 33/1 (1986), pp. 139-144; D. Carroll, *Towards A Story of the Earth: Essays in the Theology of Creation* (Dublin: Dominican Publications 1987:148); Walter Kasper, “The Theological Foundations of Human Rights”, *The Jurist*, 50 (1990), pp.148-166; R. Ruston, *Human Rights and the image of God* (London: SCM Press 2004, 40-61).

God's locutionary action. That is to say, those who have human rights should always enjoy the freedom<sup>205</sup> of God as the people of God and fulfil their responsibilities and duties in their daily lives for the sake of the kingdom.

Specifically, the above point represents a type of promissory covenant in which God has obligations to perform through the illocutionary force and according to its intended perlocutionary effect. However, human beings also have corresponding rights or claims to that covenant. God's locutionary act towards believers through the illocutionary force entails God's self-devotion and responsibility under an obligation to do something to fulfil the Word of God but it also requires an appropriate response from believers. The illocutionary force in what God said to the people of God can be seen as God's self-involving activity because it already contains the commitment to do something between God and the people of God in the biblical promise. It naturally produces a particular intended effect on the people of God in accordance with the Word of God and in the context of the kingdom as a certain ethical pattern of behaviour. This demonstrates that the promissory language in God's illocutionary force is closely linked to human rights which do something as ethical responses to God's locutionary action in believers' lives. In responding to God's promise, human rights show us what is essential to true humanity as God bestowed upon us in creation, reflecting, from a Christian perspective, on the kingdom of God (Allen 1974:131-132). Allen (1974:132) notes that:

To speak of rights in these relationships, though, is not at all to compromise God's sovereignty, but to express it, because the rights that reflect what it is truly to be a person and therein a child of God are the expression of how God in his sovereign will has bound himself in steadfast love toward his creatures. The Christian understanding of God and man, far from being contradictory to the concept of moral rights belonging to persons, is inseparably connected with it.

The following statement in 2 Peter 1:4-7 is a good example of a biblical text that alludes to what contemporary social ethics may term as human rights in terms of Christian virtue. It shows that the image of God relates God's promise to the people of God in the present world as moral

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<sup>205</sup> From the perspective of SAT, we can see the presence of the kingdom as a social reality (rules, norms, and custom) which often has the form of "X counts Y in context C" as constitutive rules, and not "Do X" or "If Y does X" as regulative rules. In this sense, social rules seems to have autonomy, but both constraints and freedom always go with autonomy.

conduct:

Thus, he has given us, through these things, his precious and very *great promises*, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become *participants of the divine nature*. For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with *goodness*, and goodness with *knowledge*, and knowledge with *self-control*, and self-control with *endurance*, and endurance with *godliness*, and godliness with *mutual affection*, and mutual affection with *love* (*my emphasis*).

Accordingly, in the context of a promise between God and the people of God, God's promise is to perform a speech-act of certain implied behaviour or commitment that would be determined as a reality in the believers through the illocutionary act in order to fulfil the image of God in them. This performance of the action in the force of what God said and did for the people of God brings about some response in accordance with God's intention that believers are to be partakers of God's nature with rights in terms of virtue. Consequently, through the illocutionary force, the action can have the intended perlocutionary effect on the people of God and produce virtues such as *goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, mutual affection and love*, as forms of human rights through God's self-involving activity.

### 5.3.3 Human Rights as a social reality and social participation

As we have seen above, the presence of the kingdom of God can be regarded as the social reality of having human rights in the present. How then can the kingdom of God as a reality in our lives help us to appreciate human rights? What is the reality that forms the basis of attaining human rights? What does "reality" mean for Christians today? We can find answers to these questions in Bonhoeffer's concept of reality. For him, the notion of reality is fundamentally linked to the reality of God and God's self-involving activity in Jesus Christ as revealed in the real world in Jesus.

It demands selfless participation in the world in response to a particular situation in order to enable the other person to exercise human rights<sup>206</sup> as the source of good in accordance with

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<sup>206</sup> Here, human rights have the same meaning as virtue, goodness and love.

the Word of God (Jesus). Thus, Bonhoeffer's notion of reality affirms the Christian's role (church or society) in attaining this reality in contemporary life by realizing the good in God (Nissen 2011:321).<sup>207</sup> It implies that one cannot be a Christian without being "worldly" simultaneously. Bonhoeffer (2005:55, 58) insists that:

There are not two realities, but *only one reality*, and that is God's reality revealed in Christ in the reality of the world. Partaking in Christ, we stand at the same time in the reality of God and in the reality of the world. The reality of Christ embraces the reality of the world in itself. The world has no reality of its own independent of God's revelation in Christ. It is a denial of God's revelation in Jesus Christ to wish to be "Christian" without being "worldly," or [to] wish to be worldly without seeing and recognizing the world in Christ. Hence there are not two realms, but only *the one realm of the Christ-reality [Christuswirklichkeit]*, in which the reality of God and the reality of the world are united... What matters is participating in the reality of God and world in Jesus Christ today, and doing so in such a way that I never experience the reality of God without the reality of the world, nor the reality of world without the reality of God (*his emphasis*).

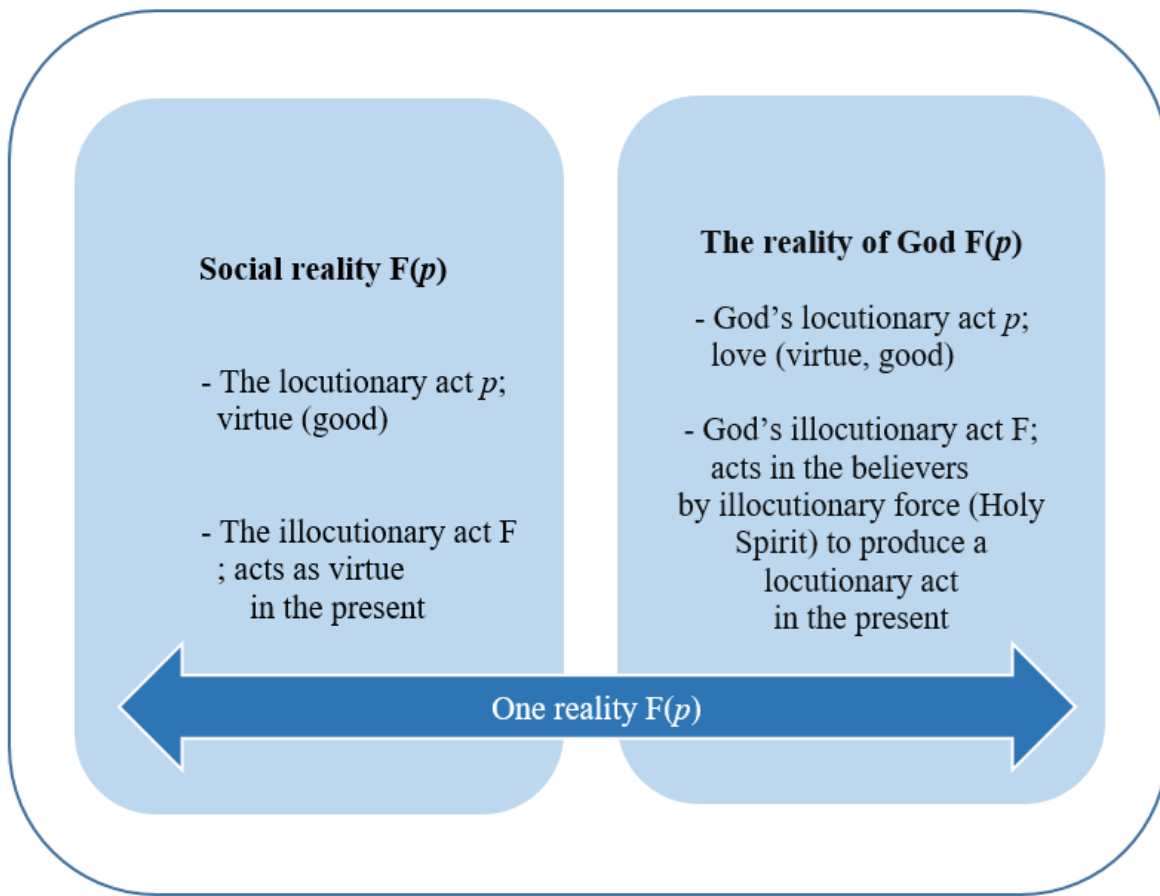
To participate in this reality as only one realm – a Christ-reality – is the true meaning of the question of what is good seeing that "good is reality, reality itself seen and recognized in God" (Bonhoeffer 2005:53,55). Further:

All ethical reflection then has the goal that I be good, and that the world-by my action-becomes good. If it turns out, however, that these realities, myself and the world, are themselves embedded in a wholly other ultimate reality, namely, the reality of God the Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer, then the ethical problem takes on a whole new aspect... *The subject matter of a Christian ethic is God's reality revealed in Christ becoming real [Wirklichwerden] among God's creature...* Human beings are indivisible wholes, not only as individuals in both their person and work, but also as members of the human and created community to which they belong. It is this indivisible whole, that is, this reality grounded and recognized in God, that the question of good has in view. To participate in the indivisible whole of God's reality is the meaning of the Christian question about the good (Bonhoeffer 2005:48, 49, 53, *his emphasis*).

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<sup>207</sup> Bonhoeffer (2005:35) uses the term "Raum" in the German original which means "realm" in English to describe the relationship between the worldly and the Christian reality: "Bonhoeffer's well-known polemic against dividing reality by 'thinking in terms of two spheres' is translated differently here by speaking rather of 'two realms.' Translating *Raum* as 'sphere' conjures the image of a ball or globe as an entity within, and surrounded by, the rest of reality; even extending the image, as in the political phrase 'sphere of influence,' does not imply that 'two spheres' encompass the whole of reality, which is divided into two. 'Realm,' a more expansive word, better conveys Bonhoeffer's meaning, and he uses it to comprise a range of dualisms. Among these is the 'two kingdoms doctrine,' though when he refers to that he usually writes '*Zwei-Reiche-Lehre*.' (Similarly *Reich*, rather than *Raum*, is used when he refers to the 'kingdom of Christ' or 'kingdom of God.') The simplest meaning of *Raum*, however, is room or space; it is a spatial term, sometimes used as a social-cultural metaphor, and there are times when it is most appropriately translated as 'space.'" Bonhoeffer (2005:58) explains that, "There are not two competing realms [*Raum*] standing side by side and battling over the borderline, as if this question of boundaries was always the decisive one. Rather, the whole reality of the world has already been drawn into and is held together in Christ. History moves only from this center and toward this center."

In SAT, God's locutionary act represents love, the nature of God, and shows that the good (virtue) and the presence of God appear real through God's illocutionary force (Holy Spirit) in believers in the present world. This does not imply that God is literally trapped in Scripture, but that the vivid activity of the living God can transcend the context and setting of the Bible and its world, and make an impact on the present. It means that the illocutionary act of God (God's self-involving activity) as  $F(p)$  in the Bible and its power and energy are being echoed as a reality in contemporary life with its momentum being the presence of God through illocutionary force. It is the responsibility of believers to respond to God's illocutionary action  $F(p)$ . The reality of God  $F(p)$  is not separate from the present reality; God's reality relates to the present reality through God's illocutionary force. Consequently, the presence of God as  $F(p)$ , specifically in relation to the kingdom of God, is reality itself. At the same time, it creates a new reality and it can cause the self to become a world of reality in believers who may experience a transformation in their lives by God's self-involving activity (illocutionary force). The reality of God as a present reality implies using illocutionary force to recreate across time and place the reality of the *biblical world* in *contemporary life*. Therefore, there is reality only in God. That reality in relation to SAT can be illustrated as follows:



Diagram\_15: The reality of God as a present reality

This reality in God is associated essentially with human behaviour which depends on the nature of God, i.e., love at God's locution. It often appears in the form of human rights in the public domain which leads us as Christians to social participation in engaging the moral issues of our time through God's illocutionary force. Christians are inseparable from social problems because God created us in the image of God to live as the people of God and for the sake of the kingdom of God. The question of how as Christians we can be good or how we should live addresses social problems where God's reality is revealed in the present. It indicates the good is never without God<sup>208</sup> which is connected to the kingdom of God in various everyday ethical issues of human rights. For Bonhoeffer, "Good is the action that is in accordance with the

<sup>208</sup> "No one is good but God alone" (Mk 10:18).

reality of Jesus Christ [God]; action in accordance with Christ [God] is action in accord with reality” (Bonhoeffer 2005:231).<sup>209</sup> Bonhoeffer (2005:55,221) further writes that:

In Christ we are invited to participate in the reality of God and the reality of the world at the same time, the one not without the other. The reality of God is disclosed only as it places me completely into the reality of the world...The moment a person accepts responsibility for other people – and only in so doing does the person live in reality – the genuine ethical situation arises. This is really something different from the abstract way in which people usually seek to come to terms with the ethical problem. The subject of the action is no longer the isolated individual; but the one who is responsible for other people. The action’s norm is not a universal principle, but the concrete neighbour, as given me by God.

It is important to derive the idea of participating in the reality of God and the reality of the world from the very concept of reality including all of God’s creation, the human person, and one’s human rights action towards real people in concrete situations. Ethics relates to the political and social dimensions of human life, that is, how we should live in this reality. *The reality in the present world is embodied at the moment that we accept the responsibility for another person.* This reality is expressed as the activities of the Holy Spirit in the believers, that is, as God’s performative action when the love of God is practiced and manifested to the world and people through God’s illocutionary force. The Holy Spirit as God’s illocutionary force according to its intended perlocutionary effect works in Christian lives as the reality of God for the sake of God’s kingdom and God’s people in the present public context. This act is a perlocutionary action through God’s illocutionary force and it produces a specific ethical response with a certain responsibility towards social problems as Christian action guided by the Word of God (God’s locution). In terms of social reality and social participation, it is the command to reenact the reality of God in the Christian life by taking responsibility for others as the people of God. Christians are called to be in the world and witness to the world about the kingdom of God by practicing God’s love through God’s illocutionary force. Therefore, Christians should participate in social issues in order to uphold human rights (good or love) for our neighbours through God’s illocutionary force and according to its intended perlocutionary effect in public discourse.

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<sup>209</sup> Bonhoeffer’s ethics is resolutely Christological in character. He especially stressed the notion of the reality of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, that is, the reality is only revealed in Jesus. It is obviously true, but in SAT, the reality of God and the reality of Jesus are the same, and not separate from each other. I will use these terms synonymously to refer to God’s illocutionary action.

## 5.4 Engaging poverty as an example of the pragmatic task

In this section, the issue of poverty is highlighted as a contemporary illustration of the pragmatic task of ethics relating to human rights in the light of SAT. This will help to establish the Christian perspective in moral problems by reconsidering the Word of God in terms of God's speech act to the believers. God's speech act  $F(p)$  in the biblical text represents God's purpose for the Christian as PER (perlocutionary ethical response) through God's illocutionary action. This draws us to engage in performative actions on moral issues in accordance with the Word of God in the public discourse in relation to our responsibilities as Christians.

### 5.4.1 Engaging poverty as a pragmatic task

If human rights are the rights that all human beings have, perhaps then poverty<sup>210</sup> is an implicit violation of human rights of the poor who are seen as socially underprivileged. According to Christian (1999:121,149), poverty "is about inequality and specifically about inequality in

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<sup>210</sup> The scope of this project does not allow me to situate the evolution of poverty fully within the broader developments, history and contours of the discourse. This is not a study seeking to solve or fully deal with the complexity of poverty in Christian ethics in generals. However, the aim here is to show how Christians could approach and think about poverty in terms of God's total speech act by using SAT, and the ethical implications of such an act. This study therefore responds to how we use the Bible (the Word of God) in Christian ethics. It is assumed that what the Bible (God) has to say about poverty can help us to construct a Christian ethics for today that will guide us to live responsibly in this context. There is also another reason I specifically address poverty here as a moral issue. It is in order to help to urge the South Korean church to take an interest in those suffering from poverty and strive to relieve their suffering. This argument cannot be developed in this dissertation. However, it is hoped that it will be covered in future research. The contemporary Korean church seems to be focussed on the growth of the church as a primary aim, rather than to dealing with social problems like poverty. Many Korean churches uncritically accept prosperity theology and use it as a tool for Church growth (Ryoo 2010:8). This tendency has naturally caused the church to forget about the poor, and poverty is sometimes considered a shame and sorrow. Jones and Woodbridge (2011:21) point that, "The prosperity gospel argues that faith is the key to material prosperity...The prosperity gospel focuses on the furtherance of one's own finances, the Bible encourages believers to be concerned with the economic well-being of others." Prosperity theology is not a truly biblical teaching because God has a special concern for the poor and the marginalized (Lk 4:18). This research by its nature does not intend to describe the specific Korean context of poverty and a way to address and minimize it. My aim is not to apply to the issue of poverty to the Korean context, but rather to show a possible approach for Christian ethics through SAT as a methodology. Nonetheless, this study of poverty based on SAT will provide reasons for and point to the necessity of why churches (both the church globally and the Korean church) and Christians should care for the poor and marginalized.



power relationships.” Power is systematically used to exclude the poor in many areas, and poverty is “not only rooted in the fall of humans but is also a result of the present working of the evil one.”<sup>211</sup>

Poverty<sup>212</sup> can be seen as a social language because it occurs among humans. We usually do not speak of poverty in animals. In the case of animals, poverty will probably mean food shortages in a narrow sense. However, human poverty is more than just a food deficit. Poverty

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<sup>211</sup> Of course, poverty can also occur due to personal laziness, ignorance, irresponsibility and stupidity. However, this study limits the scope of the discussion to the poverty that occurs through the social structure.

<sup>212</sup> It has been observed that, “Poverty is a major socio-political issue. Throughout the world millions of people suffer from poverty and its crippling effects. “Fifty-six percent of the world’s population is currently poor: 1.2 billion live on less than \$1 a day and 2.8 billion live on \$2 a day. Poverty has been called “the world’s most ruthless killer and greatest cause of suffering on earth” (Lötter 2008:17). According to Singer (2011:191), “At the end of the twentieth century, the World Bank sent out a team of researchers to record the views of 60,000 women and men living in extreme poverty. Visiting seventy-three countries, the research team heard, over and over, that poverty meant these things:

- You are short of food for all or part of the year, often eating only one meal per day, sometimes having to choose between stilling your child’s hunger or your own, and sometimes being able to do neither.
- You can’t save money. If a family member falls ill and you need money to see a doctor, or if the crop fails and you have nothing to eat, you have to borrow from a local moneylender; he will charge you so much interest that the debt continues to mount, and you may never be free of it.
- You can’t afford to send your children to school; or if they do start school, you have to take them out again if the harvest is poor.
- You live in an unstable house, made with mud or thatch that you need to rebuild every two or three years, or after severe weather.
- You have no close source of safe drinking water. You have to carry it a long way, and even then, it can make you ill unless you boil it.

Along with these material deprivations goes, very often, a humiliating state of powerlessness, vulnerability and a deep sense of shame or failure. Extreme poverty as defined by the World Bank, means not having enough income to meet the most basic human needs for adequate food, water, shelter, clothing, sanitation, health care or education.” However, Myers (2011:5) suggests that, poverty is not only a “material condition having to do with the absence of things like money, water, food, housing and the lack of just social systems...materially defined and understood.” Rather, “the nature of poverty is fundamentally relational and that its cause is fundamentally spiritual. The poor are poor largely because they live in networks of relationships that do not work for their well-being ...poverty is the whole family of our relationships that are not all they can be” (Myers 2011:15). Additionally, “Poor people face many other negative effects of poverty, including stunted physical or mental growth, lack of education, deprived opportunities for personal growth and development, and so on” (Lötter 2008:17). Lötter defines the poor as people those who “have insufficient economic means to procure the necessities of life or inadequate resources to participate in human social activities; lack essential properties, have deficiencies in desired resources, or have access only to inadequate or scant resources; have a low position in society without substantial influence, and do not perform in a way that reflects their position or ability.” For more information on the definition of the poor and poverty, see BL Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011:105-132); RJ Mouw, “Thinking about the Poor: What Evangelicals Can Learn from the Bishops.” *Prophetic Visions and Economic Realities*, 1989, 20-34. For more information about the causes of poverty, see RJ Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity*. (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc, 2005:121-132). He classifies the causes of poverty into six, namely sinful personal choices, unbiblical worldviews, disasters, lack of technology, great inequalities of power and western colonialism.

refers to a condition that prevents people from living lives in which they can participate in the range of activities expressive of their nature as human beings because of lack of economic resources (Lötter 2008:19). This definition shows that poverty is a social problem and tackling it is the common responsibility of the members of the society. Lötter (2008:19) helpfully notes that:

*Poverty results from the choices humans make about the structures of their society and from the social forces they allow to operate that produce an unequal distribution of resources. The levels of poverty and riches in society are the collective responsibility of its citizens. If it is true that poverty, as a condition that either causes a decline in physical health or an inability to share in the human social activities typical of our species, results from our choice and is our collective responsibility, then it is entirely remediable. Poverty only exists through the collective choice of citizens who allow it to be (my emphasis).*

Poverty is a problem of the distribution of resources among members of the society. Unequal distribution of resources (i.e., labour force, wage) in a society creates a gap between the poor and the rich,<sup>213</sup> and this disparity causes various social problems such as lack of good education and hygiene, unemployment, racism, ill health, inadequate living standards, and poverty (cf. Malik 2014:3). In a broad sense, poverty can be defined as a deficit, a lack of the basic necessities of life (Myers 2011:114) and of access to the bases of social power (Friedmann 1922:66). It is a situation where people lack the means or the power to sustain basic human life, that is, it refers to a state of infringement of fundamental human rights. Lötter (2008:53) explains that, “Poverty is a dehumanizing condition that deprives its sufferers of many of the basic requirements that enable people to enjoy a good quality of life”. Thus, to solve the problem of poverty, being conscious of social poverty and striving for the redistribution of resources should be our collective responsibility as members of society.<sup>214</sup>

What then does the Bible say about poverty? Can God help suffering humans escape their poverty in the present? Does Christian ethics provide guidelines about the responsibilities of

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<sup>213</sup> For example, even though they work the same number of hours in the same company, the lawyer’s income is often notably higher than the janitor’s income.

<sup>214</sup> Wolterstorff (1983:82) points that, “If a rich man knows of someone who is starving and has the power to help that person but chooses not to do so, then he violates the starving person’s rights as surely and as reprehensibly as if he had physically assaulted the sufferer.”

Christians toward the poor? What are the challenges that poverty poses to Christians? To answer these questions, we need to see the Bible as God's speech act and take into account the illocutionary acts  $F(p)$  in certain passages on poverty.<sup>215</sup> Identifying what the Bible has to say about poverty and God's concern for the plight of the poor would help us to propose guidelines for the Christian moral life today that would enable us to live responsibly as Christians through God's illocutionary action and according to its intended perlocutionary effect. This view does not merely point to moral principles in the propositional elements ( $p$ ) of the text, but to specific ways of doing something as a dynamic application of how to treat the poor based on the divine force  $F(p)$  of the text. Such an approach provides a possible solution for how to analyse the message of the Bible on poverty today as particular actions that follow God's performative action. It also shows that God is involved in human affairs and is doing God's will through the people of God in everyday Christian life for the sake of the kingdom of God. This perspective is central to the attempt to address contemporary moral problems such as poverty through Christian ethics that views the presence of the kingdom of God as God's divine speech act.

The narrative plot of the story of the rich ruler in Luke 18:18-27<sup>216</sup> is a good example of how to present a Christian biblical ethics of engaging poverty in terms of God's illocutionary action " $F(p)$ " and the intended perlocutionary effect mentioned above:

The rich ruler: "*Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" (v.18)

Jesus: "You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother'" (v.20)

The rich ruler: "I have kept all these since my youth" (v.21)

Jesus: "There is still one thing lacking. *Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor*; and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." (v.22)

Narrator: But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich. (v.23)

Jesus: "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (vv.24-25)

Disciples: "Then who can be saved?" (v.26)

Jesus: "*What is impossible for mortals is possible for God*" (my emphasis). (v.27)

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<sup>215</sup> Since I cannot examine the concept of poverty in the Bible as a whole, I will only deal with specific texts as pointers (illustrations) that relate to the moral implication of poverty from a Christianity perspective. These examples do not cover everything about poverty in the Bible, but provide some insight into the possibility of approaching Christian ethics in the context of poverty.

<sup>216</sup> See Matthew 19:16-26 and Mark 10:17-27.

The rich ruler asked Jesus what he must do to receive eternal life. Interestingly, Jesus' answer to the question was that he should sell everything he had, give it to the poor and then follow Jesus. Jesus pointed out what he missed even though he kept the commandments. Jesus challenged the rich ruler to go and sell all his belongings, distribute the money to the poor, and then follow him. Jesus' utterance shows that to inherit the kingdom of God, it is important to care for the poor and share one's wealth with them because God is interested in the poor. Again, Jesus' kingdom message is often presented as "good news for the poor" (Wells & Quash 2010:244).

The command of Jesus  $F(p)$  to sell all that one owns and share the money among the poor suggests that one should take hold of the kingdom of God to attain eternal life in the present world. Doing this is a Christian moral expectation that is produced through illocutionary force and according to its intended perlocutionary effect on the hearer to act. Jesus' command  $F(p)$  can be seen as Jesus' promise  $Pr(p)$  that "*If you sell all your belongings, and give the money to the poor, you will receive the kingdom of God.*" It indicates God's (Jesus') illocutionary action (self-involving activity) as the committed attitude of the agent of God's people to fulfil God's promise (command) to them by working in them through illocutionary force. God (Jesus) is a *doer as an agent* with illocutionary force in what God is saying about the Christian's ethical life. It means that in Christian ethics, God is a *doer (agent)* who participates actively in the *believers* in order to attain the kingdom of God and God's promises for the people of God. This perspective might be used to justify the statement, "*What is impossible for mortals is possible for God*" in v.27.<sup>217</sup> Although it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for

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<sup>217</sup> The interpretation of this verse is diverse in nature. However, many scholars hold that it means, "What is impossible for human beings can only be made possible if God intervenes" (Yong 2011:75). On the statement, "What is impossible for mortals is possible for God" (v.27), Mills, Wilson and Bullard (2003:1031) remark that, "This echoes what the angel said to Mary (1:37). God does not force his possibilities on people one must respond to what he makes possible even as Mary did: *let it be with me according to your word* (1:38)." Edwards (2015:517) affirms that, "The admission of human impossibility, however, opens the door to divine possibility: 'What is impossible with human beings is possible with God.' 'Impossible' (Gk. *adynatos*) appears again in Luke-Acts only with reference to the man in Lystra who could not walk – but who was healed by the proclamation of the gospel (Acts 14:8). The Greek word for 'healing' (*sozein*) the lame man of Lystra is the same word translated as "saved" in v.26. The disciples respond to their deficiency differently than did the rich ruler. He was confident he could do something to please God, and he went away sad; they are confident they can do nothing to please God, and God does with them what they cannot do." Lastly, Nolland (1993:891) explains that, "the Markan 'all things are possible with God' echoes a proverbial statement of Jewish faith in the omnipotence of God (see at 1:37), in

a rich person to enter the kingdom of God (vv.24-25).<sup>218</sup> God can make difficult things possible for the believers through the divine illocutionary force. God's illocutionary force invites us to trust, devotion, and obedience to the Word of God in everyday life. For example, when the hearers hear the sayings of Jesus, if they sell all their belongings and give the money to the poor, it is the result of the perlocutionary act which refers to the condition and power of receiving Jesus's utterance through Jesus' illocutionary action. The work of God the Holy Spirit is the outcome of God's self-involving activity (God's illocutionary force). A biblical ethics of poverty then becomes a perlocutionary action through God's illocutionary force. It produces a perlocutionary ethical response (PER) that shows concern for the plight of the poor when the hearers share their money or other resources with them. In this regard, a Christian ethics of poverty based on SAT should be understood as the outcome of the intended perlocutionary effect through God's illocutionary action.

In the view illustrated above, Christians ought to show deep concern for the poor according to the commandments of God. Thus, "No one may claim the name Christian and be comfortable in the face of the hunger, homelessness, insecurity, and injustice found in this country and the world" (Hollenbush 1988:83). Furthermore, some other questions can also be raised such as how can a Christian help the poor? How can you give up what you have? Should the rich alone help the poor? Do you really have to sell all your property to help the poor as Jesus said?

Before answering these questions, it is important to consider first what it means to be a rich person. In Greek, the rich (πλούσιος) are those who are wealthy, abounding in material resources or metaphorically and collectively abounding in or having an abundant supply of

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a manner that is lost in the Lukan redaction, which instead focuses on the contrast between human and divine ability. The text does not make clear how human inability and divine ability come together to achieve the salvation of (some of) the rich, but presumably the process must involve the breaking of the mesmerizing effect through which riches control those who possess them."

<sup>218</sup> "Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you" (Jam 5:1-6).

resources (cf. Danker & Bauer 2000:831). If we approach the term only from the perspective of being rich in wealth or abounding in material things, it will probably not have ethical implications for all Christians from a Christian point of view because not all Christians are rich. The biblical writers often draw attention to the financial obligations that accompany discipleship and show a pervasive concern for the just use of money and sharing with the needy (Hays 1996:464). However, the view that a rich person is a wealthy person deters many Christians from obeying the teachings of the Bible to care for the poor. Such people believe that only wealthy Christians have the responsibility to alleviate the suffering of the poor because they are rich, and that ordinary Christians do not share the responsibility of caring for the poor. Clearly, the Bible demonstrates that Christian discipleship entails using one's resources to help those in need (cf. Mt 25:31-46; Lk 12:33, 14:25-35; 2 Cor 8:13-15; 1 Jn 3:17-18). On this matter, Hays (1996:466) rightly comments that:

While the particular mandates and forms of expression may vary, the New Testament witnesses speak loudly in chorus: the accumulation of wealth is antithetical to serving God's kingdom, and Jesus' disciples are called at least to share their goods generously with those in need, and perhaps even to give everything away in order to follow him more freely.

Thus, we should not view the concept of riches as material abundance but as the sufficiency of a particular thing or state of being which could be material or emotional in nature, and time. Abundance and sufficiency are entirely different.<sup>219</sup> Whereas the former refers to an extremely plentiful or overflowing quantity or supply of material things (surplus), sufficiency means being adequate for the want or need, enough to meet the purpose or to satisfy desire.<sup>220</sup> A simple example that can be used to explain the difference between the two is to say that having too many clothes is abundance while having enough clothes means one has basic clothing appropriate for the seasons. If I already have enough clothes to meet my needs, it is a relief to give my surplus clothes to those who have no clothes. Another example is a situation in which someone who has no social relationship is experiencing loneliness. If another person who has time and emotional leisure (enough) comes up and spends time with him/her, the person is helping the poor. In that sense, poverty indicates not only the lack of material things but also the lack of whatever is part of one's daily need that makes one to be insufficient as a human

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<sup>219</sup> In a way, the meaning of a word may be subjective.

<sup>220</sup> See <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/abundance?s=t> and <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/enough?s=ts>

being.

In fact, the term for wealth (the good life) in Greek (βίος) has the connotation of life which implies life and its associated activities. It also refers to resources needed to maintain life or the means of subsistence (Danker & Bauer 2000:176-177). In broad terms, to be rich would be having sufficient to live on. It is not necessarily being “wealthy (surplus)” but having “enough.” If we regard rich as being “enough,” all Christians (not only the rich) can help alleviate the suffering of the poor and carry out in contemporary life and for the sake of the kingdom of God the ethical obligations that Jesus commanded.

Do Christians, therefore, really have to sell *all* our property to help the poor as Jesus said in verse 22? According to Garland and Arnold (2011:731), the radical demand associated with discipleship (Lk 14:33) and this command are not unique to the rich man and his situation. Rather, “renouncing your possessions is a requirement for discipleship (Lk 14:33), and others have left everything to follow Jesus (Lk 5:11, 27-28; 18:28-30).” Similarly, Nolland (1993:887) points out that the generalizability of this emphasis on the “all,” should be regarded in the light of the exemplary pattern set by the tax collector, Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10). He gave very generously of his wealth but did not dispose of its entirety. “The money aspect of the challenge needs to be set finally into the wider context of the general call to follow of Luke 9:23” (Nolland 1993:887).<sup>221</sup> As followers of Jesus, Christians must share their resources with the poor in line with the demands of discipleship and in accordance with the Word of God.<sup>222</sup>

Lastly, how can Christians share their resources (lives) with the poor? The example of the Good

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<sup>221</sup> “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (Lk 9:23).

<sup>222</sup> Lötter (2008:119) explains that, “Jesus used this requirement to determine the rich man’s loyalty. The rich man claimed that he obeyed the second table of the Ten Commandments. This obedience does not automatically imply obedience to the first table, which concerns a person’s relationship with God. To require that he sell all his belongings and give the money to the poor, asks of the rich man that he makes God’s concern for poor people his own.”



Samaritan is a helpful answer to this question (Lk 10:25-37). In the parable, a man fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and left him half-dead. The suffering of this victim of robbery represents the plight of the poor who have no clothes, money and energy, suffer ill health, and are in a helpless situation. This victim represents the poor who lack everything. However, when a Samaritan saw him, he was moved with pity. He spent his oil, wine, money, and time on the wounded victim of violence giving all the resources available to him including *material, physical and emotional things*. It is about giving *all* that he had in an expression of neighbourly love. Additionally, he asked the innkeeper to provide further care for the man promising to compensate the innkeeper for possible additional expenses on his return.

This parable shows that not only should Christians share their resources (lives) with the poor but they should also care deeply and sincerely about the suffering of the poor by *spending money (material) and time, and wholeheartedly sharing all available resources with them*. This act is a part of what it means to be a Christian because if we do something for one of the least of these who are members of God's family, we have done it for God (Mt 25:40). Jesus said, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25:35-36).

In short, God commands us to care for those who are evidently poor. God's illocutionary force in God's sayings are being echoed in Christian lives as a reality which creates a perlocutionary action which is an ethical response to the suffering of poor people. When we encounter the poor, their face (person, experience) causes us to engage in a performative act to help them through God's self-involving activity (God's illocutionary action) in us and according to the Word of God. The plight of the poor prompts a performative act on the part of those who see them. As Lévinas (1985:87) points out, "The face speaks" and it causes us to do something about their plight according to the commands of God. Therefore, such perlocutionary actions (love) through God's illocutionary force towards others challenge one to participate in the suffering of poor people in practical ways such as sharing one's substance with them:



How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little Children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action (1 Jn 3:17-18).

## 5.5 Summary and Conclusion of Chapter

From the perspective of SAT, this chapter has considered another theory for kingdom ethical performance based on the illocutionary force and its perlocutionary effect in God's speech act which could help Christians to engage some contemporary moral issues. We have seen that as a moral agent the Holy Spirit is able to do something with divine force in the believing community in order to produce an ethical Christian life in the present. In addition, we have explored the role and work of the Holy Spirit (God's illocutionary action) and the intended perlocutionary effect in the believers in connection with the God-world relation as divine discourse. We have also related the question of human rights to the contemporary moral issue of poverty as an example of the pragmatic task in public settings in the light of SAT. This continuity of God's illocutionary action and its perlocutionary effect affects the lives of Christians in important ways. Thus, the theory for "the kingdom performance ethics" moves from the biblical text to the political reality in SAT to provide new ways of thinking about the presence of the kingdom of God as God's dynamic and powerful performative action towards God's world. The application of SAT in Christian ethics makes three important contributions to each moral perspective.

Firstly, in SAT, *the Holy Spirit is the doer as the moral agent in the Christian's life*. According to SAT, to say something is to do something, which implies that a speaker does not merely utter sounds, but performs an action as language itself. More precisely, speaking is a form of action because it delivers the speaker's specific purpose to the hearer. It produces certain effects as a particular response in accordance with the speaker's communication to the hearer (perlocutionary action). At this point, the Holy Spirit (speaker) as an agent is performing an action by saying something in accordance with the Word of God in order to guide the people of God to God as a saving act having divine force (Jn 16:13-15). If we apply this theory to the work of the Holy Spirit in terms of God's self-involving activity in the human life, then we can

say that the *Holy Spirit (speaker) is a doer as an agent*. The reason is that the Holy Spirit supplies the force in saying something which relates the Spirit's role to the believer (hearer) in order to fulfil God's (*speaker*) intention under God's commands or promises to the people of God.

Accordingly, the Holy Spirit clearly demonstrates God's performative action as the agent of *God's people* to achieve God's promise to them by working within them and applying God's divine purpose faithfully. Therefore, *as a moral agent* with illocutionary force in what God is saying about the Christian moral life, the Holy Spirit is a *doer* and participates actively *in the lives of believers* in order to fulfil the kingdom of God and God's promise for the people of God in contemporary life. Furthermore, there is a mutual commitment to do something with the implication of intention, action, and attitude between God and the people of God in the context of the promises of the Bible. This means that God has a *responsibility* to fulfil what God as the creator said to the people of God (the creation) which in turn requires an appropriate human *response* to the Word of God from Christians with their new status and responsibility to engage the moral problems of the present in real-life situations. We call this phenomenon "*Co-operative Social Participation (CSP)*" and it denotes the "*co-operative action between God and humans*" in everyday life *as a social responsibility that is based on God's illocutionary action for the sake of God's kingdom and of God's will*. To be specific, the *CSP* is a perlocutionary action performed through God's illocutionary force as God's self-involving pneumatological activity. It elicits a specific response such as trust, sacrifice, devotion, obedience and tolerance to the Word of God in the public domain.

Secondly, *the presence of the kingdom of God reflects the exercise of human rights as a social reality from the perspective of SAT*. The kingdom of God refers to God's reign, as it points directly to God's self, the Word of God. The Word of God continually works in the believers through the Holy Spirit which is closely linked to the presence of the kingdom of God as a reality in the world. God's kingdom takes place only within the human response of living in the present so that human action is connected to the kingdom of God. Human rights are realized only as social reality because social reality is governed by rules, norms, and customs which

bestow duties and responsibilities on people and guarantee certain kinds of rights and a good life for them. Human rights are founded on institutional facts and constitutive rules which govern human behaviour and follow social rules (virtue), that is, the collective intent of a particular society (cf. Searle 1969:35). A right often has the form “X counts as Y in context C” (Searle 1969:33-35) which shows *how we can explain the semantics of human rights and execute these in ordinary life*. For example, human rights can be expressed following Searle’s formulation, “X counts as Y in context C”, as “*human rights count as social responsibility or obligation in the context of a certain society’s rules (the kingdom of God).*” (cf. Searle 2010:181).

The language of human rights mirrors social virtue (for Christians, the Word of God) in everyday life and it can be regarded as a series of constitutive rules whose meaning and illocutionary acts are performed in a certain situation (cf. Searle 1971:42). In this sense, the language of human rights performs a speech act of implied behaviour or commitment that is determined by non-verbal or verbal conduct. It outlines who I am or what I ought to do in a society according to public rules. It defines the pattern of right behaviour based on the constitutive rules as the illocutionary force.

According to Wolterstorff (2008:317, 350), human nature resembles God’s nature and as the image of God, it also has inherent rights. This view implies that human rights do not emanate from human beings but from God’s nature as the likeness of God is in human nature. It suggests that the issue of what virtue (value, good and purpose) is to human beings or human behaviour lies in the search for the origin of human rights in the image of God as the ethical identity of the moral agent. Hence, it is important to see human rights as God’s locutionary action in terms of [aspects of](#) Christian virtue because human rights are reflected in human actions in a society and according to the Word of God at the locutionary level of God’s nature which shows that “*God is love.*” God’s locutionary action as God’s nature which shows that God is love (the image of God) represents the content of what God said to the people of God in relation to the basic moral identity in human rights (human beings) as God’s speech act. It means that the love of God is the foundation of human rights through which we can live with others to realize

human virtue in the present life. That love calls Christians to imitate the image of God at the locutionary level because of the obligation and responsibility to God (God's kingdom) and to others (society) as human beings with human rights. One does commit oneself to any moral conduct in order to exercise human rights, showing a particular attitude and purpose towards God's kingdom and human beings in the world by expressing love to God and the people through God's locutionary action.

Lastly, SAT enables us to approach the contemporary moral problem of *poverty* as an example of a pragmatic task in terms of God's total speech act, which has some ethical implications for our daily life. God's speech act  $F(p)$  in the Bible represents God's intention for the Christian through the biblical text as intended perlocutionary action (ethical response). God's illocutionary action and its energy are continuously being echoed in the Christian life with illocutionary force in what God is saying to the believers. It invites us in our daily lives as Christians to engage in performative actions on moral issues according to the Word of God. The intended perlocutionary effect on the Christian through the illocutionary force and power also requires us to respond properly and responsibly according to the Word of God in the public domain. Therefore, if we truly encounter the illocutionary point (intent) in God's saying, we should naturally perform perlocutionary responses towards suffering people and God's kingdom.

To sum up, the role of SAT in ethics offers a new way of seeing the presence of the kingdom of God as God's self-involving activity in the lives of God's people and in God's world. This alternative theory of "kingdom ethical performance" is based on God's illocutionary force and its intended perlocutionary effect on the believers as a moral response in our modern contexts. It suggests that the work of the Holy Spirit as God's illocutionary force according to its intended perlocutionary effect can be seen as God's self-involving activity in the believers' lives as ethical conduct. God has a *responsibility* to what God is saying to the people of God which also requires an appropriate *response* to the Word of God by the Christian who has a new status and responsibility. Therefore, using SAT in biblical ethics could be a creative way of addressing contemporary ethical issues under the power of the Holy Spirit for the sake of the establishment

of God's kingdom.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS, LIMITATION OF THE STUDY, SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSION**

#### **6.1 Chapter Introduction**

This research began with the question of how Christian ethics could explain God's performative action as the presence of the kingdom in Christian life with a focus on its moral implications by reconsidering the role of the linguistic character of the biblical text from the

perspective of the SAT. This perspective argues that the work of Holy Spirit operates as God's self-involving activity in believers. It also offers practical Christian ethical insights for the implication of the illocutionary force to show that God's performative action has divine power in accordance with God's illocutionary action (the Word of God) to create a perlocutionary response (ethical response) in the believing community. The research therefore has endeavoured to investigate an implication of the kingdom of God as God's performative action in Christian life in two ways. Firstly, it examined how SAT helps us to create a pneumatological reality as God's self-involving activity in Christian moral life in terms of God's total speech act that would place "kingdom performance ethics" from the biblical text to the political world. Secondly, it paid attention to the role and effect of the illocutionary force in the Bible in helping us to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in believers in engaging contemporary moral problems and also appreciate the meaning and performance of the ethics of the kingdom based on the living voice of God in the light of SAT.

## **6.2 A discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions**

This research investigated aspects of the role of the linguistic character of the biblical text as performative action in terms of God's speech act in order to focus on the presence of the Holy Spirit (as the presence of the kingdom or God's self-involving activity) in Christian ethics and to find out its meaning and ethical implications. This approach show how it could account for the dynamic and powerful nature of biblical language for Christian life (Christian ethics) as expression of the saving acts of the living God in the present. The study also discussed and analysed the work of Holy Spirit (God) in the believer's life when relating the theories of Christian ethics to the presence of the kingdom in biblical ethics. Each of these sections sought to engage one of the research questions. In what follows we shall offer a summary of the major observations, findings and discoveries in relation to the research questions.

### **6.2.1 Summary of major observations and findings**

The research design was predicated on two primary research questions. We shall briefly refer

to the findings of the research process in relation to each of the research questions in the section that follows.

- 1) How does Christian ethics explain the tension between *the meanings of the ethics of the kingdom* in the propositional statement and *the performance of the ethics of the kingdom* in the performative dimension of language through the inherent linguistic force of the text?

In answer to research question 1, it is concluded that performative biblical language, as an inherent linguistic force, leads to an engagement with Christian ethics by reconsidering the religious language of the kingdom between the cognitive-propositional model and the performative-ontological model of religious language in two areas. The first relates to *the meaning of the ethics of the kingdom* and the second to *the performance of the ethics of the kingdom*. Christians should consider the notion of the ethics of the kingdom as an informative proposition. The meaning of the message of the kingdom in the biblical text is the *propositional content* by which the believing community produces Christian ethics as an *approach to moral living*. However, the Christian community shows biblical language to be performative, as it demonstrates not only what it means, but also the process of accomplishing that meaning. This performative aspect of biblical language is a meaningful and intentional divine action, which is closely linked to eschatology as the language of *promise, warning, and exhortation* between God and God's people. It is important to decide to change one's life in a practical way while hoping for the coming of the kingdom of God. Thus, Christian ethics has an impact on how we live and what we do in contemporary life as it helps us to change our hearts and behaviour in practical ways.

To find an answer to the question, chapter 2 investigated features of the contrasting concepts of cognitive-propositional and performative-ontological religious language of the kingdom of God in the Bible to discover its possible meaning and moral implication by comparing "*propositional morality ethics*" (PME), "*narrative ethics*" (NE), and "*unique linguistic nature oriented ethics*" (ULNOE). These three perspectives of religious language of the kingdom of

God demonstrate not only facts or statements but also meaning and meaningful acts. A text refers to its propositional content as what is “said” but the text itself produces a meaningful act. Moreover, it also points to what the text is doing (performative action), and not merely what it means (objective of the theme). However, this research suggested ULNOE as an alternative to answer the above questions through a comparison of the various features of language in relation to the ethics of the kingdom in the Bible.

The PME in the Bible indicates a cognitive-propositional approach to the uni-dimensional level that discovers and investigates moral content based on Christian confession which presents the objective norms of life as a rational task. In PME lies the understanding of inherent biblical linguistic features, which refer to the truth or faith in the biblical proposition and its relevance to the production of meaning and ethics. Thus, PME considers the information in the Bible as theological principles, and requires that Christian ethics study certain patterns of behaviour based on rational objective laws or rules to maintain and preserve the community and its profession. However, PME as propositional knowledge of the objective statement only relies on the content of what is said rather than what the passage wants to do in relation to the text’s momentum for the reader. It shows that PME in the Scriptures is about the thought-content which has little influence on the inward life of the reader because it simply refers to propositional meanings as informative facts. It also has no power to do anything to the reader or cause a particular effect, since it does not engage the core of the reader.

On the other hand, NE in the biblical narrative structure, shows performative language in terms of the text’s momentum in Scripture. It indicates the effect of the experience of participating in a biblical understanding of the contemporary context and the way the biblical world relates to the lived experience of the faith community in the contemporary world. Thus, NE is not just PME, but Jesus’ story itself which performs a particular action as the ethical content of the Word of God in the performative aspect of biblical language. It also facilitates the identity of the community as a pattern of behaviour in ordinary life. Nonetheless, it is not enough to explain the dynamic and powerful role of the performative element of biblical language in the performance of Scripture by the people of God, or to account for the nature of biblical language



in the narrative of the text. In relation to Christian ethics, Hauerwas (1983:66,162) notes that narrative is the medium through which God chose to reveal God's self in self-disclosure (revelation). This means that NE can be related to God's revelation of the knowledge of God. However, knowledge of the text as simple facts only conveys formal information such as truth or falsehood to the reader; it has no power to do something to the reader or cause a particular effect (cf. Searle 1969:31). *God does not only reveal God's self in the sense of the knowledge of God in the Bible, but also as an act such as blessing, promising, warning, exhorting, and so forth, for the sake of God's kingdom.*

However, the ULNOE, according to the nature of performative-ontological religious language, expresses God's divine actions such as promise, warning, and exhortation, all of which do something to the believer in line with the Word of God. That is, the performative dimension of biblical language has a certain intentionality for the Christian life (ULNOE) in accordance with a particular divine purpose that does something by communicating between God and the people of God in order to build the kingdom and execute God's will. Thus, in the ULNOE, the Christian ethical goal and its testimony perform something about the kingdom of God, which means that the sovereign intentional acts about the kingdom do promise, warn, and exhort the confessing community who are called to be God's true people or disciples in the present.

## 2) What Christian moral implications emerge from a Speech Act Theory approach to the theology of the presence of the kingdom of God as divine discourse?

Firstly, in order to answer to the question, chapter 3 explored the notion of speech act theory in linguistic philosophy and reconsidered linking to Christian ethics and the presence of the kingdom as divine discourse. Through this research, we found that in Christian ethics, God (the Holy Spirit) is *a doer (agent)* who participates actively *in the believers* in order to fulfil the kingdom of God, not simply *as a helper* who does something *to the believers*.

From SAT, Christian ethics can discover new biblical moral sensibility and specific practical

directions by observing the illocutionary act in Scripture, thereby distinguishing between the *meaning of what the Bible says* (proposition) and the *force of what the Bible says* (illocution act). Since often Christian ethics depends on biblical intent in the Bible (cf. Birch 2011:27-33) or on the message of the kingdom proclaimed by Jesus (Chilton & McDonald 1987:19-31), to know exactly what Christian ethics means or aims to do, first, we should know what the Bible says and what the kingdom of God means in the words of Jesus. In order to recognize the meaning of the text more fully and to draw moral implications, we should not simply refer to propositional meaning or theological principles in Scripture as norms of the Christian life. Rather, the focus should be on the illocution level of the text because in SAT, only illocution can determine meaning and act in line with biblical language such as warning  $W(p)$ , promise  $Pr(p)$ , blessing  $B(p)$ , and so on (cf. Searle 1969:31). Unfortunately, previous studies of Christian ethics seem to concentrate merely on the propositional aspect (locution level) in the Bible and its effect as response (perlocutionary level) and not on the illocutionary act. That is to say, the meaning of what the Bible says (locution) and the response of saying something from the Bible (perlocution) do not amount to the meaning of the text as the original biblical author intended and it also cannot make one do something in accordance with what the text says. Therefore, the illocutionary act can refine the meaning of the ethics of the kingdom and the genuine response to it and provide hermeneutical insight into Christian ethics.

In relating the meaning of *what God says* (locution level) to *the force of what God says* (illocution level) (cf. Austin 1975:108), it is assumed that *God is a doer as agent* because God supplies the force in saying something (what God is already doing for us in the Words of God), which relates God's role or work with the utterance in sayings such as warning  $W(p)$ , promise  $Pr(p)$ , and blessing  $B(p)$  to the people of God in order to attain God's particular intention for the kingdom of God in ordinary life. Stated differently, the illocutionary act of God as  $F(p)$  and its energy are continuously being echoed in the present world as the law of conservation of energy which bridges the gap between the written world of the Bible and the contemporary world as a new reality or world through illocutionary force. In other words, God is a *doer as agent* with illocutionary force in what God is saying about Christian moral life. In this sense, Christian ethics should be a "*re-enactment of God's illocutionary force*" (RGIF) in Christians' lives. The Holy Spirit as God's performative action invites the people of God into the world of

the Bible with a dynamic and powerful force and drives them in the present world according to the Word of God.

Secondly, as we saw in chapter 4, the idea of the kingdom from the perspective of SAT can be viewed not only as three dimensional in God's performative act, namely the kingdom in the past, present, and future, but it also entails its moral reflection. The presence of the kingdom can be characterized through SAT according to the threefold character of the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts as the presence of the kingdom in the past (locutionary level), the present (illocutionary level) and the future (perlocutionary level), together with their theological and ethical implications for the performance of morality in the present life. The following outline summarizes the basic descriptions of the kingdom and its moral direction from the perspective of SAT on three different levels:

- (1) *The kingdom of God in the past* demonstrates that God has spoken to God's people in a *locutionary act*; it functions as a propositional expression, that is, the information that is communicated between God and the believer for God's kingdom. The locutionary act of the kingdom only points to the propositional elements and the propositional meaning in what God said.
- (2) *The kingdom in the present* refers to the force of what we do as an *illocutionary act* through the inherent linguistic force in accordance with God's purpose, which shows how a proposition is to be taken so that it creates meaning or meaningful action according to the Word of God. The intent of God in the specific language act is communicated in the form of an intentional act as the kingdom in the present under the illocutionary act.
- (3) *The kingdom in the future* refers to the effect of a *perlocutionary act* on the believer which could include being persuaded, frightened or alarmed because of the illocutionary force. The kingdom in the future reacts to the intended effect of what has been said to the believer or the response.

Thirdly, the purpose of the kingdom of God is the salvation of God's people, and *the utterances of Jesus can be understood as messianic language which counts as the illocutionary force in SAT which leads the believer's PER* (perlocutionary ethical response). The propositional content of the kingdom "*p*" becomes a reality "*F(p)*" in the present through the illocutionary force "*F*" according to the specific intent of God – the salvation which is expressed as MIF (*messianic illocutionary force (MIF) in the messianic acts*). In this regard, the sayings of Jesus and his teachings should be seen as performing actions with divine messianic force to execute His messianic purpose for the believers in everyday life. Even though the utterance of Jesus is a past event, its illocutionary force or energy and its intentions are continuously being echoed to the believers in the present. It draws the believer's PER as a response to the words of the Jesus, such as obedience or trust in practical ways through the MIF and its intention.

Fourthly, SAT enables us to understand the presence of the kingdom as a divine discourse and its moral effects. Wolterstorff (1995:19) has employed SAT to explain divine discourse which is not God's revelation but God's speech act, and which also indicates that the fact that "God speaks entails that God exists" (Wolterstorff 1995:95). Moreover, the knowledge about God in the Bible as objective fact only conveys to the reader formal information such as truth or falsehood. However, *God does not only reveal God's self as knowledge about God in the Bible, but also as divine acts such as blessing, promising, warning, exhorting, and so forth to the people of God in order to attain the kingdom of God. God's illocutionary force creates a perlocutionary effect on believers since it produces appropriate responses such as trust or obedience, that is PER, or "Christian ethics". Thus, the presence of the kingdom as a divine discourse can be performed in the believing community to create a new social reality through the performed illocutionary force and its perlocutionary effect. That is to say, the ethical conception of the kingdom of God is itself "a rule-governed form of behaviour" in God's speech acts such as the value system of righteousness in the Christian community.*

Fifthly, the three basic Christian ethical theories represent the totality of the kingdom of God as God's speech act according to the Word of God respectively from the perspective of SAT. Christian ethical theories relate God's performative action to virtue, duty, and consequence

ethics in ordinary life. These theories, which can be characterized through the threefold character of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in SAT, could be said to correspond to aspects of virtue ethics (God's locutionary action), duty ethics (Jesus's illocutionary action) and consequence ethics (perlocutionary action). This point shows that Christian moral life is the result of God's speech act to the people of God in terms of the presence of the kingdom of God, for the sake of the kingdom and God's will in the contemporary confessing community. The following outline summarizes the basic descriptions of the Christian ethical theories and their focus from the perspective of SAT:

- (1) Virtue ethics could be regarded as the ethical identity of the moral agent through God's locutionary action.
- (2) Duty ethics could be seen as the ethical purpose of the rules of behaviour in Jesus' illocutionary action.
- (3) Consequence ethics could be viewed as the ethical responsibility from the effect of the Holy Spirit's perlocutionary action.

Sixthly, through chapter 5, in the light of SAT, the work of the Holy Spirit as God's self-involving activity according to its intended perlocutionary effect can be seen as the *Co-operative Social Participation* (CSP) in believers' lives. It refers to the "co-operative action between God and humans" in everyday life *by having a social responsibility according to God's illocutionary action for the sake of God's kingdom and God's will*.

The Holy Spirit demonstrates God's performative action as the dedicated agent of *God's people* to achieve God's promise for them by working within them and by faithfully applying God's divine purpose. It contains the commitment to do something with the implication of intention, action, and attitude between God and the people of God in the context of the promises in the Bible. It means that God has a *responsibility* to what God said to the people of God, and it also

requires a proper human *response* to the Word of God with the new status and responsibility that comes from being a Christian. We call this phenomenon “*Co-operative Social Participation* (CSP)”. To be specific, the *CSP* is a perlocutionary action through God’s illocutionary force as performing God’s self-involving activity. It elicits a specific response in the public domain such as trust, sacrifice, devotion, obedience and commitment to the Word of God.

Seventhly, *the presence of the kingdom of God reflects human rights from the perspective of SAT*. The kingdom of God refers to God’s reign, as it points directly to God’s self, the Word of God. The Word of God continually works in the believers through the Holy Spirit which is closely linked to the presence of the kingdom of God as a reality in the world. God’s kingdom takes place within the ambit of the human response of living in the present so that human action is connected to the kingdom of God. Human rights are realized only in social reality; this is because social reality contains rules, norms, and customs. More precisely, human rights rely upon the institutional facts and the constitutive rules which govern human behaviour due to the fact that it applies social rules (virtue), meaning the collective intent within a particular society (cf. Searle 1969:35). It often has the form “X counts as Y in context C” (Searle 1969:33-35) and it relates to *how we can explain the semantics of human rights and execute them in ordinary life*. For example, human rights can be expressed following Searle’s formulation, “X counts as Y in context C” as “*human rights count as social responsibility or obligation in the context of a certain society’s rules (the kingdom of God)*.” (cf. Searle 2010:181). That is to say, speaking about human rights (the language of human rights) mirrors social virtue (for Christian, the Word of God) in everyday life; it can be counted as a series of constitutive rules in terms of meaning and illocutionary acts which are performed following these sets of constitutive rules in a certain circumstance (cf. Searle 1971:42). In this sense, the language of human rights performs a speech act of implied behaviour or commitment that is determined by non-verbal or verbal conduct. It refers to who I am or what I ought to do in a society according to public rules. It defines the patterns of behaviour based on the constitutive rules as the illocutionary force.

Lastly, SAT enables us to approach the contemporary moral problem of *poverty* as an example of God's total speech act, and it leads to ethical implications in our daily life. God's speech act  $F(p)$  in the Bible represents God's intention through the biblical text for the Christian life as intended perlocutionary action (ethical response). It invites Christians to performative action according to the Word of God in our daily life when facing moral issues. The intended perlocutionary effect encountered in the Christian through the illocutionary force and power requires us to respond properly with responsibility according to the Word of God in the public domain.

### 6.2.2 Discussion of the findings

Some valuable insights have been gained in this research project in relation to the research questions.

First, it is shown that the inherent linguistic force of the text (the performative aspects of biblical language) lead the reader (believing community) into a performance act of the Word of God to *bridge the gap between the biblical text and the praxis of the kingdom of God* in contemporary Christian life. The performative dimension of biblical language has a certain intentionality that is captured in a unique linguistic nature oriented ethics (ULNOE, that is *the performance of the ethics of the kingdom*) in the biblical text according to a particular divine intention that is doing something based on the performative language of the biblical text as an act of communication between God and the people of God in order to build the kingdom in the present.

Second, the researcher values the insights that were gained into the dominant hermeneutic perspectives of SAT, i.e., that speaking a language is the performance of an act. It implies that *the speaker is a doer as an agent* because the speaker supplies force in saying something which relates the speaker's role to the hearer in order to attain his/her intention. This issue is what one is doing when saying something, and what effect the act of saying something has on the hearer?

This warrants much greater reflection and study. This perspective highlighted the theological concept that *God is a doer as an agent in believers' lives*, not simply a helper for God's people and the world. This has the possibility of giving a more detailed understanding of how God works in contemporary believer's lives as an active participant. The outcome of such a study would provide valuable theological information for Christian ethics.

Third, this research project found that the ethical conception of the kingdom of God is itself "a rule-governed form of behaviour" because, it contains certain constitutive rules such as the value system of righteousness in Christian communities. The speaker's (God) intention is obtained not just through words but rather by doing something as an "act" in a human community (believing community) with "a rule-governed form of behaviour". The use of language is explained through certain constitutive rules that govern human behaviour (Searle 1971:40). This focus reflects on the confession of certain communities which produces a particular identity as new patterns of action, that tell us who we are in society as well as who God is as we identify God's illocutionary force in human history. This view will provide a guideline on how Christians should live in the world as well as a new perspective on Christian participation in our political reality according to the Word of God.

### **6.3 Contributions of this research**

Taking the above findings into account, it can be concluded that this research project has made some contributions to how God through God's Word makes the ethical performance of the Bible possible in contemporary life in the light of SAT. It is clear that the living voice of God (God's speech act) continually works in believers through the Holy Spirit as an agent of God's divine will (*a doer*). This evokes "God's self-involving activity" in Christian ethics which makes morality a reality not merely as the individual's own effort but as God's performative action.



However, previous studies of ethical theories tended to focus mostly on the notion of the life of the believer or moral themes in the biblical text rather than on God's divine action. Christian ethics does not only refer to a pattern of life based on the Bible as a one-way street but to God's active participation in human actions as a two-way street between God and humans in order to fulfil God's will and establish God's kingdom. That is to say, *God's performative action* can be seen as Christian ethics (the performance of the ethics of the kingdom) and a reality in the Christian life through God's illocutionary force  $F(p)$  and its intended perlocutionary action (PER).

Thus, we shall highlight some of the contributions that this study has made under the headings below.

### **6.3.1 Christian Ethics (Systematic Theology)**

It is contended that this study has contributed to the field of Christian ethics (systematic theology) in the following manner:

#### **6.3.1.1 A return to theocentric thinking**

First, the study has shown that God's performative action in the presence of the kingdom approach can yield a valuable application of a theocentric ethics which is based on the primacy of the Bible in ethical reasoning (cf., 3.2.3, 3.4.1). This study illustrates a novel contribution to Christian ethics (systematic theology) by arguing that Christian ethics should be completely theocentric. Even though many Christian ethicists agree that Christian ethics is oriented toward revelation and not toward morality (Lehmann 1963:45), over the last hundred years, ethical theories have tended to focus primarily on moral principles, characters from the Bible, and moral themes, rather than on God's self-involving activity in the lives of believers. This research demonstrates that, as Barth (1981:18) pointed out, "theological ethics is itself dogmatic, not an independent discipline alongside it" and it holds God's promise for the people of God and the world.

### **6.3.1.2 The work of the Holy Spirit in Christian life**

Second, this study contributes an understanding of how the work of the Holy Spirit as God's performative action in the Christian life works in terms of God's speech act through God's illocutionary force and its intended perlocutionary action. The research showed that to a large extent the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life leads to co-operative social participation (CSP) in engaging the moral issues of our time (cf., 5.2.2, 5.3.3). The Holy Spirit's performance in Christian life is outlined as follows:

- (1) The Holy Spirit is the agent of the performative act through God's illocutionary force according to its intended perlocutionary effect in the people of God, and believers also engage in performative actions regarding various contemporary social issues through the activity of the Holy Spirit.
- (2) The Holy Spirit performs a perlocutionary action in the believers through God's illocutionary action which prompts certain appropriate actions according to God's illocutionary force such as sacrifice, devotion and tolerance as a means of engaging moral issues of our time in the public domain.
- (3) God the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, is always faithful to carry out the divine responsibility towards the people of God for the sake of the kingdom of God (to keep the Word of God), while human beings give the appropriate response in accordance with God's illocutionary action in the world.

The design of the project further shows that there is a clear logic that informs and upholds a pneumatological reality as God's self-involving activity in Christian moral life in terms of God's total speech act. This theological logic can be identified and engaged in Christian ethics. Hence, this is a novel theoretical contribution to the field of the work of the Holy Spirit and Christian approaches to social participation.

### 6.3.1.3 The Trinitarian archetype and Christian Ethics

Third, this study has shown that from the perspective of SAT, it can offer some insight into the relationship between the theological Trinitarian archetype and Christian ethics (cf., 4.2.3, 4.5). The findings of the research showed that Scripture presents God as the speaker or doer in terms of a communicative act which entails the idea that God is a participant with divine authority in human discourse (Christian life) who is set to attain God's purpose and kingdom in the people of God in the present world (cf., 4.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.1, 4.4.2). Christians encounter the saving acts of the living triune God in contemporary life which helps us to know who we are, how to live, and what we ought to do in the present. It is necessary to consider that the presence of the kingdom (the Trinitarian God) is part of God's total speech act as a divine force which includes the meaning of what God said (locutionary act), the force of what God said (illocutionary act), and the response of saying something (perlocutionary act). This logic can be connected with the doctrine of the Trinity and how it relates to Christian ethics through the divine force in the communication between God and God's people.

### 6.3.2 Hermeneutics and Biblical Studies

Fourth, the theoretical lens of speech act theory (Austin, Searle, Evans, Pratt and Grice) in linguistic philosophy was applied to engage the possible meanings of texts and their moral dimensions. This theory offers new hermeneutic possibilities for the interpretation of the Bible. Moreover, this approach emphasises that a possible meaning of texts is not just to understand their content. Rather it focussed on the importance of acting properly in accordance with the communicative intent between God and believers in relation to biblical texts (cf., 2.4.1, 2.4.1.1, 2.4.1.2, 2.4.1.3, 2.4.1.4, 3.2.3, 3.4.1, 3.5.1, 3.6). This hermeneutic lens can distinguish between the *meaning of what the Bible says* (proposition) and the *force of what the Bible says* (illocution act). In order to recognize the meaning of the text more fully (including its moral dimensions),

we should not simply refer to propositional meanings in Scripture. Rather, our focus should be on the illocution level of the text because in SAT, illocution is able to determine meaning and to invite action in line with the kind of biblical language being used, such as warning  $W(p)$ , promise  $Pr(p)$ , blessing  $B(p)$ , and so on (cf. Searle 1969:31). It also allows one to grasp the text's possible intent. These hermeneutic tools allowed the researcher to engage aspects of the theology of the text without losing sight of text's social context in relation to its intention. Thus, the illocutionary act in the biblical text can refine the meaning of the text and the reader's response to it and provide hermeneutical insights into biblical studies and biblical ethics.

### **6.3.3 Moral problems (Human Rights) and Christian Ethics**

This research project was designed with the question of how Christians deal with moral problems, or act properly in a given circumstance, according to God's communicative revelation (the Word of God) (cf., 5.3, 5.3.2, 5.3.3, 5.4.1). Thus, it sought to gain insight into contemporary moral issues relating to human rights for Christians in the light of SAT. This approach helped to illustrate a Christian perspective on moral problems by reconsidering the Word of God in terms of God's speech act to the believers. God's speech act  $F(p)$  in the biblical text represents God's purpose for the Christian as PER (perlocutionary ethical response) through God's illocutionary action. This draws us to engage in performative actions on moral issues in accordance with the Word of God in public discourse in relation to our responsibilities as Christians.

This project sought to make a contribution to Christian biblical ethics from the perspective of SAT that provided linguistic philosophical and social structures around which to engage contemporary moral problems. Naturally, many other theories, and theorists, could be employed to approach this task from various other perspectives. This may be a task for future research.

## 6.4 Limitations of the study

The study demonstrated the Christian ethical implications of the presence of the kingdom as God's performative action in light of SAT as a hermeneutic approach to Christian ethics and contemporary moral concerns. However, since the project aimed to illustrate the possible value for Christian ethics of approaching the presence of the kingdom of God from the perspective of SAT, it could not focus on biblical hermeneutics as a whole. The argument presented in this study is not a normative in that sense i.e., it is not the only way to interpret God's intention for Christians in terms of God's speech act, neither does it cover all other ethical approaches or hermeneutic considerations. Rather, it shows a certain possibility for an approach to Christian ethics using this method. Naturally, a great deal of further research could be done on this method.

Firstly, this study is a limited research confined to methodology. This has made the study denser by limiting its scope. Since SAT is mostly based on the speaker's utterances, which in Christian ethics refers the biblical text (in this argument, the Word of God), it is difficult to deal with contemporary ethical issues and their alternatives which are not easily covered from the perspective of the Biblical text. Thus, the study sought to highlight principles and possibilities for biblical ethics, rather than ethical norms. The Bible is not to be seen as a 'master key' for solving all ethical problems. However, with issues that are not directly addressed in the Bible (such a cloning, genetically modified foods), we can suggest implications, insights, and perspectives of indirect Christian ethics through SAT.

Furthermore, since the research used the term 'Word of God' in relation to God's self-revealing communication in the Bible as a hermeneutical tool to support the central argument of this thesis about Christian ethics by using SAT, it is possible that some may argue that the approach reflects a biblical literalist or fundamentalist understanding of the biblical text. However, the research would contest such a simplistic collapse. Indeed, the methodology of SAT does place a great deal of importance on the saying and communicative intent of the text since SAT is based mainly on the utterance of the speaker (or text). Yet, if one takes the theory seriously, as

has been attempted in this study, it quickly becomes that a rigorous approach to SAT is predicated upon a careful and stringent identification, and engagement with social rules, customs and history including non-verbal conduct, that facilitate meaning in the text. Thus, the contention is that this is in fact a more stringent and careful engagement with the text and its social world than some other approaches to biblical ethics that only focus on the communicative content (propositions) contained in the Bible.

Another possible limitation of this research project is that it could only make selective use of the biblical text, rather than engaging Bible as the whole. It is unavoidable that constraints of space, time and the limitations of the researchers own expertise would not permit a much wider engagement with the Biblical text in its wide diversity of genre's, literary styles, redactions and intricacies. The texts that were used in this study were chosen since they served to strengthen the point of the illustrative argument under consideration. Naturally, other text could serve equally well, and other text still, could complicate and nuance the approach offered here. Again, this could be a rich field of further research.

Lastly, there is a need for a more detailed explanation and study towards finding practical ways in engaging a wider variety of moral issues of our time in more concrete and helpful ways. Although this research suggested some information and alternatives on Christian moral life relating some moral dilemmas, this study could not provide concrete solutions to practical ethical problems because of the character of the project. The study sought to engage moral issues rather than solve them. In order for a broader set of findings to be offered it would be necessary to investigate not only Christian perspectives and norms, but also the structures and policies of social communities that uphold and create such moral dilemmas.

## **6.5 Suggestions for further research**

This thesis on the Christian ethical implications of the presence of the kingdom as God's performative action in Christian life from the perspective of SAT could be said to have

answered its research question in the overall discussion of the chapters. It has illustrated the possibility of the SAT approach to a biblical ethics of the presence of the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, it cannot be said to be an exhaustive study of Christian ethics relating to a wide range of moral issues. Thus, it is necessary to keep the door open for possible further research in the light of SAT. Here are some recommendations and interests that arose for the researcher out of this study:

- (1) Human dignity research: a rediscovery of God's performative action in terms of God's speech act will serve to engage human dignity by considering ethical issues related to this important subject in relation to the Bible. God made humans dignified in the image of God. Hence the "[g]ood and the telos of the human being, who is created in the image and likeness of God" (Guroian 2005:43), may be considered in relation to participation in the Divine Life from the perspective of SAT and the Bible. Indeed, God's illocutionary action is continuously being echoed in the believers. The fact that God communicates with human persons is already an expression of divine relational intent. A careful engagement with the locution, illocution and perlocution of God's communicative intent with humanity (in the Bible) could offer a novel approach to biblical ethics in relation to human dignity.
- (2) A practical alternative study of a variety of contemporary ethical problems: there are various ethical problems in the world and it is not easy to solve them. This implies that ethical issues can cause polarization among Christians without knowing what to do or what is a right. Moral dilemmas in many cases lie in the differentiation between the *deontological* and *teleological* (or consequentialist) approach to ethical decision-making. The deontological approach determines which actions are *inherently right* or *wrong* which indicates that our duty is intrinsically to do the right thing. The teleological approach, however, focuses on *the outcome of the act* which results in the greatest advantage of good over evil. In these perspectives, we will never be able to find another as Christians. However, the methodology, "ULNOE", "PER" that was considered in Chapters 2 and 3 from the perspective of SAT could help to bridge the gap between the *deontological* and *teleological* approaches towards moral problems. Thus, this could lead to practical alternatives to ethical issues. In this study, we only

considered the issue of poverty in relation to human dignity. However, it is possible to engage some contested issues (such as human sexuality, gender issues, and other theological disputes) from this perspective to gain new possible understandings.

These are only two possible areas for future research out of many that could be considered (in addition to the possibilities for testing, refining and developing the approach that were mentioned in 6.4).

## 6.6 Conclusion

This dissertation concludes by asserting the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit as God's self-involving activity in the lives of believers and perlocution as moral response from believers in the light of a SAT approach to the Bible with regards to the kingdom God. From the perspective of SAT, the Christian ethical implications of the presence of the kingdom, as God's performative action, not only aims to contribute towards the meaning of the ethics of kingdom, but also to recover an appreciation of the work of the Holy Spirit (indeed the Trinity God) in Christian life.

At the heart of the Trinitarian archetype, which is based on SAT, Christian ethics is not only a matter of patterns of human behaviour or human virtue (value). Rather, it is more than that. It is an ethical performance from the biblical text in relation to political realities through the Holy Spirit's performative action (God's illocutionary action) in Christian moral life. The role of SAT in ethics offers new possibilities to approach the presence of the kingdom of God as God's self-involving activity for God's people and God's world. This theory of "kingdom ethical performance" is based on God's illocutionary force and its intended perlocutionary effect in the lives of believers. This approach illustrates how the work of the Holy Spirit, as God's illocutionary force according to God's intended perlocutionary effect, can be understood as God's self-involving activity in the lives of believers for the sake of God's kingdom. It implies that God has a *responsibility* to what God has said (promised, exhorted) to the people of God and it also requires an appropriate human *response* to the Word of God in relation to Christian



identity and contemporary moral challenges. Therefore, this approach could serve to enrich biblical ethics by offering new insights, and possibilities, for Christians to live faithfully in partnership with God through the Holy Spirit for the establishment of God's kingdom in contemporary life.

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